

the Courier

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Dossier

Writing and
publishing

Country reports

Djibouti
Swaziland



COUNTRY REPORT

Djibouti

Ravaged by internal conflict in 1991, Djibouti is now striving to restore its economy, with international help. The structural reforms currently being implemented should help the recovery along but the situation is still a long way from being stabilised. Despite this, there is a feeling of optimism in the air. The tertiary sector – notably transport – offers some real opportunities. This small country has had a difficult democratic apprenticeship, and has been buffeted by the seemingly endless political turbulence of the wider region. Its development efforts need to be seen in this context.
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Postal address
'The ACP-EU Courier'
European Commission
200 rue de la Loi
1049 Brussels
Belgium

Address for visitors
Astrid Building
12, rue de Genève
Evere – Brussels
Belgium

Publisher
Philip Lowe

Director of Publications
Dominique David

Production Manager
Dorothy Morrissey

Journalists
Kenneth Karl
Thibault Gregoire
Aya Kasasa
Caroline Ofoegbu
Dorothy Morrissey

Secretariat
Carmela Peters
Claude Morin
Fax 299 30 02

Circulation
Margriet Mahy-
van der Werf
Tel. 299 30 12
Fax 299 25 25

Webpage
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Swazi children

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Architecture in the
Moorish style in Djibouti
City (above).

Traditional Swazi costume
(middle).

Aminata Sow Fall, the
celebrated Senegalese
author, at a book-signing
session.

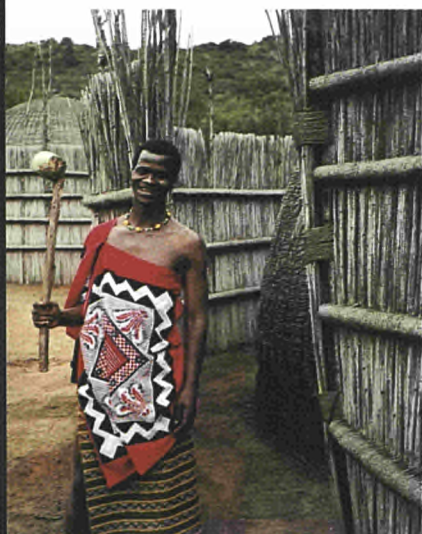
Back cover

The camel is still an
important mode of
transport in Djibouti.

COUNTRY REPORT

Swaziland

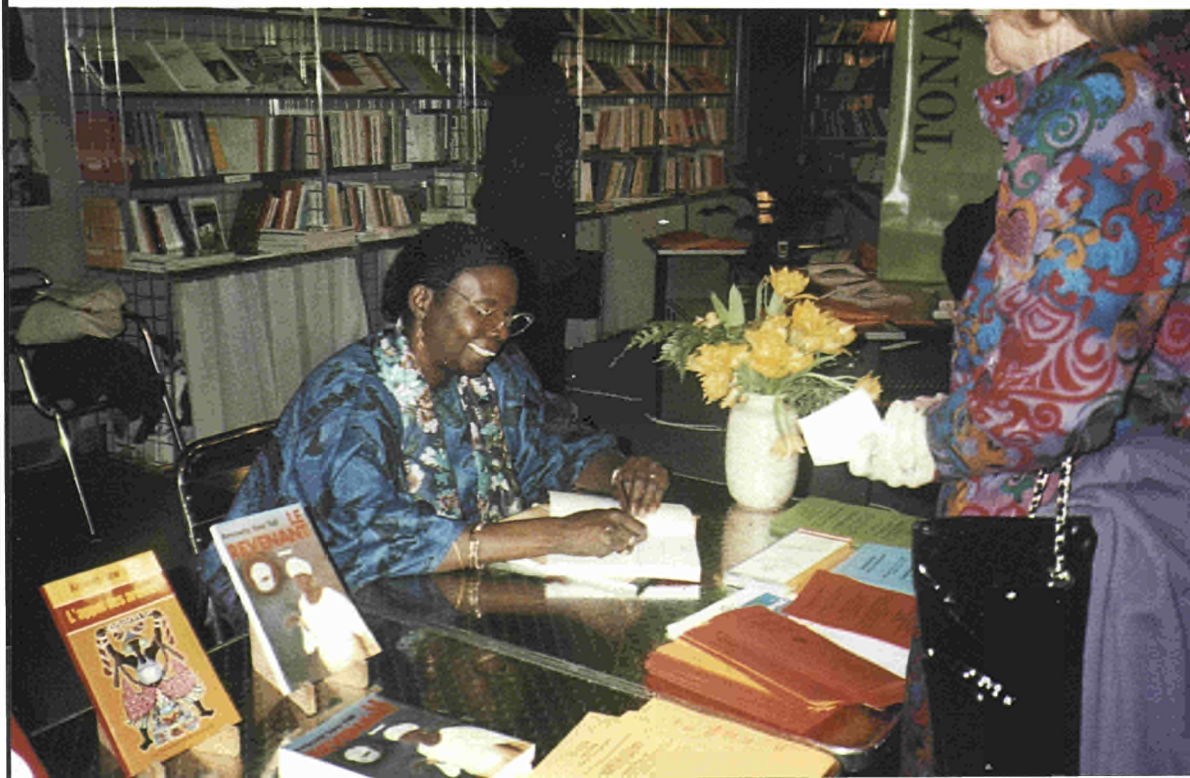
One of the last remaining monarchies in Africa, Swaziland is a fascinating blend of tradition and modernity. Wedged between South Africa and Mozambique, this tiny nation of less than a million inhabitants was always seen as an island of tranquility in a turbulent region, a factor which contributed to its growth. Today, Swaziland faces a challenge from the (now stable) economic giants on its doorstep. Known for its tolerance, the Kingdom is ready to embrace change, but it also wants to safeguard the traditional elements that have contributed to the country's stability and identity.
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DOSSIER

Writing and publishing

'As the century draws to a close, literature has become established as a key art form which irrigates all the others: cinema, music, painting and photography. It has an influence on politics and on the life of societies. It brings together cultures and peoples, and enriches them.' These few lines, borrowed from *Pierre Astier* of the French publishing house *Le Serpent à Plumes*, sum up why people decide to become writers. If you want to be published, however, the main problem is making the breakthrough in the right circles. Getting your words into print is no easy task, especially if you are an ACP author.
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Danial Meyer, President of the Association of ACP Chambers of Commerce

'Wake-up' call for the ACP private sector

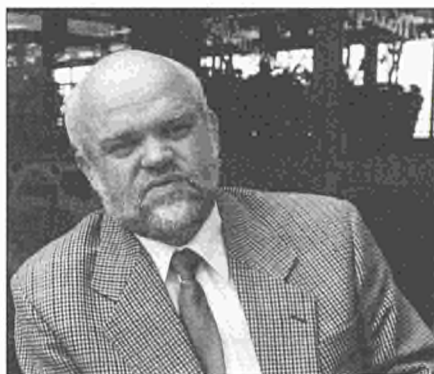
In January, ACP Chamber of Commerce representatives assembled in Las Palmas (Canary Islands) to discuss the role of the private sector in future ACP-EU relations (see the article which follows in the 'ACP' section). The event was organised by the Association of National ACP Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Other Economic Operators which came into being two years ago. Zimbabwean businessman, Danial Mayer, was chosen as its first president. His main business interests are in the field of health care equipment and products. He is also highly active in schemes to support informal sector micro-enterprises in Zimbabwe and is a Harare city councillor. Despite a hectic conference schedule, Mr Meyer found the time to give The Courier an interview about some of the key issues raised at the Las Palmas meeting.

■ At the first working session, we were presented with a long list of obstacles which hinder the private sector in the ACP countries – ranging from human resource weaknesses to a lack of access to finance. What, for you, are the main obstacles?

– The first is to get recognition from the other social partners of the importance of the private sector. Linked to that is the need to have a strong, active representative body for business. So I guess you would say that the emphasis should be on capacity-building. We actually have functioning chambers of commerce in fewer than 30 ACP states. Many are still very weak and the problem here is usually related to funding.

This morning, we had a working breakfast at which we discussed the various obstacles, and looked at how we can help each other. Interestingly, it went on a lot longer than expected, and the focus was very much on finances – on how we can actually establish a secure foundation. In the course of my travels, I have visited other chambers and learned how they have overcome the problem. There are a number of possible approaches. For instance, chambers of commerce could take over responsibility for company registration, business records, annual returns and so on. They would obviously get paid for doing this. Another possibility is for them to process VAT refunds for tourists at airports, again for a fee. This would immediately give them some regular income. Then there are members' subscriptions of course. But if you rely solely on subscriptions, the amount involved may have to be substantial –

discouraging small businesses,



who could benefit from membership, from joining.

One thing that I don't think is a good idea is statutory membership – where the authorities oblige firms to join chambers of commerce. That leads to the imposition of certain controls. I believe you have to carry the business community with you. The priority is to help national chambers get organised and get their advocacy role right. They need to be seen as important partners whether it be in 'Team Zimbabwe', 'Team Togo' or 'Team Jamaica'.

■ In your own presentation, you gave the example of a business which had to complete 32 different forms simply to get registered and begin operating. A little later, the representative of one ACP chamber – in the specific context of his own country – said civil servants were the 'number one enemies'. You talk about partnership with government but a lot of businesspeople seem to view bureaucrats as an obstacle rather than as potential partners in development.

– In many countries, the only regular growth sector used to be the civil service, which became bloated. Then came the pressure to perform in an ever more competitive global environment. Governments found themselves forced to get their budgets in order and introduce fiscal discipline. The result has been pressure on them drastically to reduce the size of their bureaucracies. And there has been some progress. In my own country, the emphasis is strongly on performance-related contracts. A Permanent Secretary or departmental head may only have a contract for three to five years. It isn't a job for life. And performance-related criteria are applied in deciding whether the contract should be renewed. This is something that seems now to be widely accepted. So you are seeing a reduction in the size of the civil service, and some smartening up.

But of course, there is still a long way to go. You mentioned the speaker who portrayed civil servants very negatively. I think this echoes a feeling that still exists in many ACP countries. In general, public officials have tended not to be particularly motivated. This is probably linked to their levels of remuneration. Their pay hasn't always reflected the responsibility they have been given. So the issue of civil service effectiveness needs to be addressed. And it is something that chambers of commerce can become involved in, in a spirit of team partnership.

Let me give you a hypothetical example of the kind of thing that needs to be tackled. Imagine the kind of reception a top entrepreneur might have at the airport in some countries. He is there – perhaps partly for a holiday –

but also keeping an eye out for possible investment opportunities. He is stopped by the immigration official who starts by asking: 'How long are you staying?' The reply is: 'Maybe a week, maybe two. I'll see how I like it'. That immediately raises eyebrows. The next question is: 'What do you plan to do here?' Tired after a long flight, the visitor says: 'Just look around. I might be interested in investing here.' The official is now highly suspicious. His first reaction is: 'What's wrong with your own country'. And then he asks for evidence that the new arrival has enough money to support himself! The next stage is customs clearance – a big hall where all the dirty washing, literally speaking, may well be pulled out and inspected. It isn't done discreetly. Now that sort of treatment is hardly likely to whet people's appetite to come and invest in a country. The result is a lost opportunity.

What I am saying is that we need training for officials to ensure that departments like immigration and customs are more user-friendly. Perhaps we need to get the World Customs Organisation involved in training – or EU immigration bodies. And I do not think it is a lost cause. I don't really believe that officials want to see their country screwed up any more than the rest of us. They live there. That is where their children are being raised and educated. This kind of self-destructive approach is not a general characteristic of people – so we can do something about it. But it needs to be done in this spirit of team partnership. If government, labour and capital, together with civil society, work together, then we can tackle the problems.

■ *The conference delegates are obviously keen to get business more directly involved in ACP-EU cooperation. There was even a suggestion that the private sector should negotiate directly with the EU on the aspects of the future agreement that specifically relate to it. Is this realistic given that we are talking about an international treaty between states? How can the private sector – or indeed any other non-governmental interest groups – be meaningfully involved?*

– I would start by pointing out that many economies have not benefited as much as they could have from the Lomé Convention –

for example, the preferential access to the EU market. A key reason, as many delegates have noted, is that information dissemination has been poor. Many businesses have simply not been aware of the possibilities and of how to go about exploiting them.

On the other hand, some sectors have benefited. Zimbabwe's floriculture is a good example. People have become less dependent on tobacco growing there by moving into products like flowers, fruits and paprikas. And thanks to this kind of success, businesses are now waking up to the fact that the Convention offers something really worthwhile. And, of course, they are beginning to exert pressure on those involved in the negotiations. They want an input into the successor arrangement, to ensure that the benefits are not just retained (recognising the impact of the WTO and other constraints) but actually go further, helping to boost investment flows and so on. So what the private sector is now saying is: 'This affects us directly and we must have a part in the process'. I accept it is unrealistic to expect a direct role in the talks. As you rightly point out, it is an international convention. But the private sector must be involved in the wider process and more directly in implementing the provisions that are finally put in place.

■ *You have managed to attract quite a lot of people to the conference (ACP ambassadors and Commission representatives) who are close to the negotiations. What is the significance of this?*

– I think on the ACP side in Brussels, a lot of the ambassadors involved in the talks are aware that there is a capacity problem. They recognise that working with the private sector can help them sharpen their skills. And they are keen to find out what we think is needed to boost business activity in ACP countries. That is why they were attracted by this invitation to come and join us. I should stress, again, that this is happening in a spirit of partnership. It is not a 'them and us' situation. We are together in this, since what is agreed will affect all our economies and regions. Having said this, I really only expected to see one or two ACP people here from the negotiating sub-committees. But as you know, we have got nine ambassadors from across the ACP

regions. Most have not been particularly vocal, but that is because they have come here, above all, to listen. Talking to them privately, however, I get the impression that they are quite enthusiastic about this gathering. And it looks as if there will be pressure on us to arrange something similar, though perhaps on a somewhat smaller scale, twice more before the final round of talks.

■ *What will be the most important achievements to come out of this conference?*

– The main thing is to show that the ACP private sector has the ability to come up with constructive suggestions. Building on that, there is the fact that our ambassadors can use the recommendations we make, in their talks with the EU. Both sides agree that private sector development and involvement are important but now our negotiators will actually be able to say: 'This is what the ACP business world is looking for.' We have succeeded in building up a relationship based on confidence.

The benefits of the conference should also be felt in the longer term through the networking that has taken place. People from the various ACP regions will actually start doing more business with each other. You know that according to the estimates, less than 6% of Africa's trade is between countries within the continent itself. I find that alarming. On the other hand, we are beginning to see signs of more business being transacted at a regional level. In my own region of Southern Africa, for example, Mauritians are now investing in Mozambique, there are South African ventures in Malawi and Zambia, while some Zimbabwe companies have operations in Namibia. I believe this conference will help that process, albeit not immediately. The ACP private sector has had a 'wake-up call'. We know the world won't stand still for us. ■

Chambers of Commerce conference

Revving up the engine

The words 'engine of growth' are repeated so often nowadays when people talk about the private sector that they risk becoming a cliché. The phrase was certainly heard a lot at the conference centre in Las Palmas (Canary Islands) when representatives of ACP chambers of commerce assembled to discuss the sector's role in future ACP-EU cooperation. But the idea that lies behind this expression is not invalidated simply because it has become well-worn. On the contrary, popular usage underlines the extent to which the 'private enterprise' message has caught on in the post-cold war world.

The Las Palmas conference was organised by the Association of ACP National Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Other Economic Operators (hereafter referred to as the 'ACP National Chambers'). Supported by the European Commission, the event was attended by participants from more than 60 of the 71 ACP countries. In addition to the 'core' presence from chambers of commerce and other business groupings, the meeting was attended by nine ACP ambassadors – who are involved in negotiating the future shape of the ACP-EU relationship – and by representatives of the relevant European institutions (the Commission, the European Investment Bank and the Centre for the Development of Industry).

The theme of the conference was *the role of the private sector in future ACP-EU relations* and the agenda covered six key topics:

- the obstacles hindering the development of the private sector and its participation in ACP-EU cooperation;

- the role of the ACP private sector in the future ACP-EU agreement;
- EC Commission and EIB support for the private sector (notably micro, small and medium-sized enterprises);
- the role of the informal sector (and its gradual integration into the formal economy);
- improving communication and trade information flows;
- defining the role of the ACP National Chambers.

Reflecting on the role of government

Dominique Aguessy, a Senegalese consultant in industrial relations, set the ball rolling with a comprehensive review of the obstacles facing ACP businesses. These, she said, included the small size of most national markets, an absence of human resources, and difficulties gaining access to finance. Entrepreneurial activity was also hindered by government failings – notably a lack of transparency – while local land laws often undermined business confidence. She put forward a number of suggestions to improve the situation, and laid particular emphasis on the need for institutional reforms and a credible macro-economic policy. More fundamentally, there was a need to reflect on the role of government. It was not, according to Ms Aguessy, a question of 'sweeping the state away'. Its task was complementary to that of the private sector. She also underlined the

importance of developing a 'national entrepreneur class'.

Throughout the debates, many speakers took a critical view of the activities and attitudes of public authorities. The general feeling seems to have been that while they *could* do much to create a favourable business environment, too often, they got in the way of entrepreneurial development. *Crispin Mwanyika*, of the Tanzania Chamber of Commerce, gave credit to people in senior levels of government but suggested that there were too many people in the middle and lower ranks who were 'not ready to let go'. *Warren Thomas*, from the Solomon Islands, highlighted the dilemma of high duties and taxes – which governments relied upon but which placed a burden on businesses and exporters. *Sadou Aissata*, the Secretary-General of Niger's Chamber of Commerce, spoke of the need to break down the suspicion felt by many officials that to be in the private sector was synonymous with shady dealing. The opposite view, that there was too much venality in the public sector, was also aired, notably by *Otumba Adeolu Balogun* of Nigeria. He made a forceful contribution, stating that 'bureaucracy militates against economic development in West Africa'.

How to boost private sector involvement

In the session which dealt with proposals for the future ACP-EU agreement, the conference heard presentations from both sides of the negotiating table. The first speaker was *Gabriel Pepson*, the Ambassador of Papua New Guinea in Brussels, who chairs

The conference 'family photo' This was one of the largest-ever gatherings of ACP private sector representatives



the ACP negotiating group on private sector investment and other development strategies. He argued that the current emphasis on the private sector was 'not really breaking new ground'. Various instruments already existed in the Lomé Convention to encourage entrepreneurial development but, for various reasons (notably a lack of information and complex procedures), these had not been fully exploited. Mr Pepson suggested that new forms of support were required to give businesses, and especially micro-enterprises, more direct and easier access to credit. He called for the establishment of an ACP-EU Business Forum, and for priority to be given to rehabilitating infrastructures. The ambassador also argued for extra venture capital resources for the EIB, the establishment of an ACP-EU investment guarantee mechanism, and an enhanced role for the CDI – which should be renamed the Centre for the Development of Enterprise (and possibly relocated in an ACP country).

Athanassios Theodorakis, Deputy Director-General at the Commission, revealed that there was similar thinking on the European side on a number of these issues. It too favours boosting the role of the EIB and the CDI (CDE in future?) and favours 'collaborating actively with private sector bodies to increase their capacities and their presence as agents of development.' Mr Theodorakis indicated that, in general terms, the Commission's support strategy should 'make for the best possible results as regards sustainable growth of the private sector, increased competitiveness, job creation and poverty alleviation.' More specifically, he spoke of programmes to:

- help governments frame and implement so-called *second generation* reforms (the first generation being structural adjustment programmes);
- support dialogue between the public and private sectors;
- enhance the quality and availability of the financial services available in the ACP countries;
- build the capacities of local service providers (professional, technical, management etc.);

New premises in Las Palmas

The decision to hold the ACP National Chambers conference in the Canary Islands was unrelated to the fact that this is the only part of the EU, outside the French overseas departments, where sunbathing can be guaranteed in January (in fact, the programme was far too packed to do anything but glance enviously at the beachgoers – mainly Spaniards and escapees from the frozen Nordic countries).

The ACP National Chambers will soon be based in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria – though maintaining an antenna in Brussels – thanks to assistance provided by the local island authorities. The meeting was timed to coincide with the formal opening of the new premises which representatives were given an opportunity to tour.

Gran Canaria is an object lesson in successful development. Once isolated and poor, it and the other Canary Islands now have thriving private sectors and successful economies based on tourism, fishing and agriculture.

- support initiatives for transferring technology and know-how, and promoting best practice;
- help micro-enterprises (micro-financing).

On the following day, César Debén, Head of Unit for Development of the Private Sector and Financial Institutions (DG VIII) gave further details of the Commission strategy for assisting entrepreneurial activity in the ACPs, with the aid of computer-generated charts and illustrations.

The discussion which followed the presentations by Mr Pepson and Mr Theodorakis revealed that ACP entrepreneurs have a number of different priorities and concerns. Laker Levers, President of Jamaica's Chamber of Commerce (and a bureau member of the ACP Chambers) underlined the importance of research and technology as the basis for development. He favoured joint ventures as a tool for technology transfer, adding that the general

aim should be to ensure that 'added value remains in the ACP country or region'. For Philippe Broohm Djahlin of Togo, globalisation was a key factor. As he stated bluntly; 'We cannot be in the market if we are not competitive'. Egas Mussanhane of Mozambique raised a practical difficulty in talking about participation by businesses in the cooperation process. In his country, he said, the private sector was very extensive, 'and not very homogenous'. He was happy that large foreign enterprises were investing in Mozambique, 'but you also need to take care of the growing local private sector.' The latter, he claimed, had been neglected up to now by the international institutions – including the EU. Milagros Puella of the Dominican Republic was concerned about a lack of flexibility in current EDF regulations. She mentioned, in this context, projects designed to facilitate trade with neighbouring non-ACP countries, which were only possible with a derogation from the existing rules. Finally, Michael Astaphan of Dominica pinpointed 'institutional strengthening and capacity-building as the main area where the EU can help us.'

Problems in obtaining credit

The following morning, Dominique Aguessy again took the floor to introduce the discussion on how the EU institutions could support the ACP private sector in concrete ways. She was followed by speakers from Commission, the EIB and the CDI, each of whom explained the existing mechanisms and offered perspectives for the future. Two issues given a thorough airing in this session were bureaucracy, and credit for businesses.

The first of these was raised by Egas Mussanhane (among others) who complained about EU procedures. 'We lose time trying to get everything right. How can we speed up the way we work'. César Debén emphasised that the EDF procedures were *not* those of the EU but had been agreed together by the European side and the ACPs. He assured the conference, however, that both sides were aware of the

concerns and were seriously looking at ways of improving the situation.

The question of access to financing could pose something of an ideological dilemma to those who believe that markets should not be interfered with. A number of Chamber of Commerce representatives were dissatisfied with the high interest rates levied on loans to small enterprises – even when the funding has been channelled by donors through local intermediary institutions. The trouble is that small loans are said to have higher levels of default, making it a market imperative to charge an interest premium. On the other hand, high interest rates may partly be due to a shortage of providers – and hence a lack of competition. *Mrs Noël* of the EIB explained a system called 'Apex' lines of credit which was designed to bring financing organisations into competition. For *Crispin Mwanika*, however, the problem in rural areas was not the level of interest rates but the fact that no financing was available at all. This point was also made by *Ricardo Maximo Torao Oyo* of Equatorial Guinea's Chamber of Commerce.

Improving communication

The ACP countries need help with their launch into cyberspace. This was one of the key messages to emerge from the session devoted to improving communication and trade information flows. The debate was introduced by *Jeffrey Goddard*, a consultant with the Commonwealth Secretariat, who also had some pointed remarks about what he saw as the lack of priority for new trade initiatives, and about the absence of a private sector input in the current ACP-EU talks. Indeed, he suggested that the EU proposals were 'short on new ideas'. It was his comments on communication technologies, however, which sparked some of the most lively debate at the conference. He urged more use of the Internet and satellite technologies, pointing out that these could reduce communications problems and lead to the establishment of a 'virtual' global market. In this context, he highlighted a project by the Commonwealth Chambers

Key recommendations from the conference

A new ACP-EU agreement should support:

- technological research and development;
- regional cooperation among ACP private sectors (and with neighbouring non ACP states and territories);
- direct access for ACP chambers of commerce to EU funding;
- good governance and transparency (to boost investor confidence);
- rehabilitation of key infrastructures;
- SMEs and women in business;
- education and training aimed at boosting expertise in the most up-to-date technologies;
- capacity building for the ACP National Chambers;
- better legal and fiscal arrangements designed to facilitate trade and investment;
- the development of an enabling environment to foster the competitiveness of both the public and private sectors.

The conference also made a series of recommendations for action by ACP governments and EU institutions, and called specifically for technical and financial support for initiatives by the ACP National Chambers.

Participants agreed to submit their recommendations to the ACP negotiators – adding that this negotiating team should include ACP private sector representatives designated by the ACP National Chambers.

of Commerce called 'Combinet' which would be an online business information service. He suggested that the ACP National Chambers should consider doing something similar in the form of an Internet Directory of ACP businesses with background information. He emphasised that funding should be made available for this as a priority.

There was general enthusiasm for the proposal, though tempered by some practical concerns. *Tekeste Asghedom* of Eritrea observed that most ACP businesses were micro-enterprises and wondered whether 'this is the right time to think about the Internet'. *Mohamed Omar Dabart* of Djibouti supported the idea of an Internet Directory but suggested that lessons be learned from the COMESA network 'which has not worked very well'. *Glenda Esdelle* from Trinidad and Tobago said the proposal was 'quite utopian' but was not against it in principle. She cited the system set up in Egypt that had initially been supported with public funds but was now 'self-financing'. She drew wry smiles when she also noted that companies were sometimes reluctant to release information – 'not just because to hoard it is power, but to give it out is risk, especially as far as the taxman is concerned!'

The Las Palmas meeting packed a great deal of debate (and networking) into a very short space of time. In addition to the above, there were in-depth discussions about the informal sector and about the operation of the ACP Chambers own organisation (funding issues featuring prominently here). The subjects under discussion were serious and the atmosphere was highly constructive. There were, however, quite a few light-hearted moments as participants got to know each other better. The comment by a Caribbean speaker on the final day, congratulating the EU for basing its currency union on the Eastern Caribbean model, drew smiles all round. And it is a difficult to imagine a formal session in Brussels commencing with everyone waving greetings to the interpreters (who duly reciprocated)!

At the outset, *Danial Meyer*, the ACP National Chambers' President spoke of 'the need to feed the (ACP-EU) negotiators with information – not sit in our home countries whingeing and griping'. Las Palmas should certainly have given the negotiators some food for thought – and the event was mercifully short on whingeing.

Information highways and the ACPs

by Guy Saglietto*

Thanks to modern communication methods, electronic commerce is now the world-wide norm, with 'virtual' salesrooms, remote purchasers and globalised markets. A key question is whether the economic development of the ACP states can be promoted by these 'new information technologies'.

In the midst of the current talks between the EU and the ACP countries on what form the post-Lomé Convention relationship should take, one important agenda item appears to be how the ACPs can be helped to find new outlets for their products. With this in mind, it is reasonable to consider what conditions are needed for creating and operating a 'virtual' economic environment for ACP products.

Today we are faced with the reality of market globalisation. Trade, once a question of simple barter, is now a highly sophisticated operation – and new communication techniques have rendered distance increasingly irrelevant. Information is a world commodity and products are now marketed on a global scale.

This is the context in which those involved in agriculture, forestry or fishing must now operate. Until recently, all they had to do was take their products to market or sell them at auction. If the price wasn't right they might choose to stay at home and wait for the buyers to come to them. But now, they have to be corporate managers, developing the skills to market, promote and distribute their produce throughout the world. They are forced to grapple with exchange rates, tariff barriers, WTO regulations, new environmental legislation and plant-health restrictions.

It is still the case that farm produce, timber and fish are the key resources in most ACP states. But on the whole, these resources are poorly marketed because producers are not in direct contact with po-

tential foreign customers. The variety and quantity of the products that they can offer are generally insufficient to interest international buyers. The supply is small-scale and dispersed, and product quality is variable. Big purchasers, therefore, work through traders, who group together, select and classify products, and take their 'cut' in the process. These traders tend to have traditional suppliers, and often do not consider offers from other, perhaps more isolated or smaller producers. Deprived of access to new customers, such producers may have difficulty keeping their heads above water.

In the modern commercial environment, only larger enterprises have the capacity to develop and grow by their own independent efforts. This is because only they have sufficient financial and human resources to market their products and seek new outlets by themselves, thereby allowing them to break out of their existing regional markets and trade at the national, or even the international, level.

But thanks to new information technologies, there is now an Internet-based solution for firms in the ACP states. It is a system which is adapted to the specific characteristics of each individual sector. The burgeoning of electronic commerce could enable small and medium-sized operations (and indeed, large firms not yet selling their goods internationally), to use modern marketing methods and offer products to customers throughout the world – without having to invest heavily in a commercial management team, a marketing division or an export department.

The computerisation of certain auctions and markets is the first stage in the use of modern communications techniques. In stage two, these computerised systems are

opened to 'remote' buyers, so that they can take part in real-time transactions. The impetus for moving on to the third stage, which involves a *virtual salesroom*, comes from certain operators with support from Europe. The purchasers and vendors do not actually meet physically in one place, the link being established by a server which manages both real-time sales and *batch-mode sales*. The latter are offers for a specific period (generally short-term such as half a day, a day or a week), of a batch of standardised products on a virtual site. The *remote buyers*, whether from the producer's own country or elsewhere, log on to make their (short-term) offers.

Under this arrangement, the producer's market is no longer limited to his own region or even his own country. He can now sell his goods on a global scale. And as increasing numbers of potential buyers join the system, the tendency is for prices for the goods on offer to rise. This is not merely evolution, but a full-scale revolution, forcing operators in specific sectors (forestry/timber, fish/shellfish, farm produce) to adapt and cooperate at regional and national level.

As regards ACP countries, one might pose the question: what do Kenyan roses, Senegalese green beans, pineapples from Côte d'Ivoire, tropical wood from Gabon, Madagascan vanilla, and tuna from the Solomon Islands have in common? The answer of course is nothing – other than the fact that they could all be linked to an ACP-country commercial server, which organises and manages electronic trade in these products – bringing significant benefits for all the producers in question.

So what might a commercial ACP server actually do? A brief look at the three main sectors of interest to countries of the South is sufficient to underline the potential of such an arrangement:

Fish/shellfish: The EU has to import 50% of its requirements in this area. But because of a lack of organisation, fish from ACP states – with privileged access to European markets under the Lomé Convention – represent less than 7% of the imports of the 15 EU Member States.

African tropical timber: There is not really a world market in tropical timber, the sector in

* Consultant with PPY International, specialising in the agricultural, fisheries and agri-foodstuffs sectors. E-mail: ppy-int@world-net.fr

Africa suffering from a lack of organisation and commercial cooperation. Asian producing countries tend to predominate.

Fruits and vegetables: These struggle to compete with produce from non-ACP countries in Asia, Latin America and Oceania, despite the laudable efforts of COLEACP. The latter organisation was set up to help ACP countries promote their horticultural produce in Europe.

It is clear that while marketing organisations have been set up in Europe covering fisheries products, cut flowers, fruit and vegetables, and other sectors, (and users have benefited) there is still no cooperation in these areas between producers and the relevant sectors in the ACP states. There is, of course, no miraculous or pain-free solution. If an ACP virtual-selling site is to be profitable for producers, it must offer a sufficient quantity and diversity of goods. In other words, producers will have to *group together to sell, and cooperate in order to export*, while restructuring their sectors upstream for greater harmonisation.

It should be stressed that we are talking here about large-scale commerce based on the practices and rules of international trade. It is not simply the camembert producer (for example) selling cheeses over the Internet to credit card customers around the world. The latter is a specialist trade involving an individual or unique niche item. At the other end of the scale, commodities obviously already have their own specialised global trading systems. For the products listed above, however, where the volume of transactions is not necessarily large enough to interest commercial commodities exchanges, new information technologies open up significant new opportunities. But strict and inviolable rules must be put in place that are accepted and used by all the participants in the system. These rules, enshrined in a charter, should relate principally to traceability, quality norms, pricing and payment guarantees.

There is hardly any need nowadays to explain the usefulness of *traceability*. Europe's experience with Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE), more commonly known as 'Mad Cow Disease', is illustration enough. Since this disease emerged,

the merits of traceability have not been seriously questioned.

Quality norms are also essential. The remote buyer is 'blind', and if he is to make purchases in complete confidence, there must be universally recognised standards. At the European level, such norms exist for each sector and a genuine Community standardisation policy is being implemented to serve as a reference for electronic transactions. And what of the situation where the vendor takes an over-optimistic view of the quality of his product? In this case, to avoid any dispute on arrival, merchandise could be checked by an approved expert at the time of despatch.

Remote, batch-mode sales are sales by mutual agreement. However, such transactions must involve *reference prices* on the basis of which negotiations can take place. Fortunately, most operators know the approximate market value of their produce thanks to available lists of prices, drawn up largely on the basis of actual transactions that have taken place (at auction or on

Trade, once a question of simple barter, is now a highly sophisticated operation – and new communication techniques have rendered distance increasingly irrelevant.

traditional markets). In the case of auctions, prices can be published in what is practically 'real time'. In traditional markets, it should be possible to obtain indicative prices from the relevant national trade associations, which are generally in a position to provide this information.

As far as *payment guarantees* are concerned, the obligation is obvious. Given that timber producers, farmers and fishing-boat owners would have difficulty controlling this key aspect on their own, they will need to consider methods of inter-company and intra-regional co-operation.

It would be wise for company managers to work together with others involved in the same sector, through national or regional groupings. Such groupings, whether private or otherwise, would manage

the sales systems. These would be made available to participating members on acceptance and signature by the latter of a charter enshrining the rights and duties of everyone involved. Such sales systems, grouping together players of various nationalities in a single sector, should all use a central ACP server – which would offer a range of standardised, guaranteed products in sufficient quantity to attract remote customers.

Opening-up a virtual salesroom, while necessary, is not sufficient in itself to guarantee the operation's commercial success and profitability. A proactive marketing approach will also be required, targeting potential customers, informing them about the existence of the salesroom and the advantages it offers, and encouraging them to use the new tool. This is another aspect of the operation which could pose difficulties for people working in isolation and again, grouping together appears the logical solution. There would also have to be decisions on the location of the Internet home page for the ACP commercial server, and on how it should be organised.

To sum up, the arrangements described above should make it possible to offer standardised products to remote purchasers in sufficient quantity to encourage them to visit the website and enter into transactions. Product quality would be guaranteed by a classification scale based on universally recognised quality standards backed by an accreditation body that is independent of the system. ACP companies in the timber, fisheries and agricultural sectors should consider the new opportunities offered by the evolution of communication techniques, while they are still in their infancy. They need to adapt rapidly because, in the transition from barter to modern commerce, change is taking place ever-more quickly. Time is at a premium and tomorrow is already upon us! ■

G.S.

A media view of human rights – 50 years on

Article One of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood. This provision, and the 29 other articles adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1948, received wide coverage last December as the world's media commemorated the 50th anniversary of the historic declaration. Here, we look at how the event was reported with a selection of

journalistic comments from around the world.

We go first to Paris, a suitable starting point, since it was here that world leaders gathered on 10 December 1948 to put their signatures to the declaration. Writing half a century later in *Le Monde*, Robert Badinter stated that 'human rights are the moral pre-occupation of our era'. About a thousand people took part in the ceremony to mark the anniversary at the *Palais de Chaillot* in the French capital (while concerts, colloquia and numerous other events were being staged in other European capitals). But a few days earlier, we had an illustration of how human rights and diplomatic relations may be uneasy bedfellows. The occasion was a lunch at the Elysée Palace attended by Nobel peace prize-winners. At issue was the invitation from the French government to the *Dalai Lama* – a gesture which angered Beijing. In the week preceding the lunch, there were rumours that, bowing to pressure from China, President Chirac would decide against inviting Tibet's spiritual leader. The reports were hastily denied, and the *Dalai Lama* did indeed travel to Paris. The reaction from the official Chinese press was critical. 'Westerners use human rights as a weapon to exert political pressure on developing countries', reported the *China Daily*. It went on to say that 'in

order to continue extending their domination, countries in the West insist that the developing world accept the concepts of democracy established by them and link human rights to economic aid'.

Universality, western style?

The western press devoted many column inches to the commemoration of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights with numerous special features. In the southern-hemisphere, notably in Latin America and Africa, the tendency was to go for a single article often in the form of an editorial. And the *China Daily* was not alone in taking the opportunity to criticise developed countries. Numerous daily and weekly publications, in their coverage of human rights and democracy, took the line that these were based primarily on western concepts.

The Algerian daily, *El Watan*, cited the writings of Joseph Yakoub, a Syrian political scientist resident in France. He argues that the Universal Declaration is merely a product of a western society which 'has the gift of making its culture universal, of taking it out of its environment, of isolating it and of setting it up as a formal example to other societies'. *Le Temps*, in Morocco, published a long eulogy on the virtues of the country and its monarch, before calling into question the universality of human rights and, more particularly, what it referred to as the 'meddling' of western countries in the internal affairs of independent nations, 'under the guise of the defence of such rights'. According to the article: the right of intervention has become a double-edged sword which threatens not only world peace but also the evolution of the very principle of universality'.

Other editorial writers in the southern hemisphere preferred a didactic rather than a critical approach. They took advantage of the anniversary to explain and illustrate the 'western concept of human rights' in its original context. They drew on useful lessons

from the past, recalling the history of human dignity from England's Magna Carta (1215) to the ashes of the Second World War. There were references to the Dutch Republic, the independence of the United States, the Treaty of Westphalia and the French Revolution. From a philosophical angle, they discussed the writings of Locke, Kant and Rousseau and from a legal perspective, they looked at the foundations of positive law, and the works of jurists such as the Italian, Beccaria. Some journalists chose to recycle the precepts of renowned feminist and anti-racist movements. Many publications reprinted the preamble and articles of the Universal Declaration. And there were references, of course, to the fact that while 48 countries signed-up in 1948, they did not include the Soviet Union and its central-European satellites (the provisions being deemed to be incompatible with socialism at the time), South Africa (where *apartheid* was beginning to emerge as a state policy) or Saudi Arabia (which had a different view of the status of women).

In tracing this historical evolution, some writers could not resist recalling what they saw as glaring inconsistencies. There were references to black slavery in North America, the situation of women not so long ago in many developed countries (particularly as regards the right to vote), the sad fate of many indigenous peoples and the general attitude of the west to the 'Third World'. Human rights, according to *La Tribune* (Algeria), were born of a dual reality: 'On the one hand there was Europe (essentially), recovering from the worst atrocities and most shameful acts committed against humans. On the other, there were societies, peoples and cultures in almost all other continents seeking independence and respect for their inalienable right to be different.' The newspaper continued: 'While investing all its efforts in the struggle for its own reconstruction, the so-called free world as a whole also perpetuated the most deeply-rooted obstacles to the claim for freedom on the part of an ever-growing number of what were then colonies'.

The Cold War years created another major impediment to the universality of human rights. *Piensa Libre* (Guatemala) explained that

'this global ideological confrontation led to the politicisation of human rights. These have now ceased to be what they *should* be, namely a set of ideologically unbiased standards, whereby man acknowledges that both his own dignity and that of his fellow human beings is above any objective held by the state. Human rights have been stripped of their essence by both right- and left-wing authoritarian dictatorships, the former to promote socialism and the latter to serve imperialism'. Other journals took up this idea, speaking of a two-tier system for assessing human rights violations depending on the state in question and the extent to which it attracted media coverage. Serbia and Israel were cited in this context.

Inventory

In some countries, a certain section of the press, usually the official state 'mouthpiece', adopted a self-congratulatory stance, extolling, to whoever was listening, the virtues of its president or monarch in establishing the rule of law. On the other hand, there were many editors who supplied an inventory illustrating the present state of human rights in the world. 'Victims of injustice are now more conspicuous than ever', according to an article in *La revue du Liban* whose author spoke gloomily about 'torture, arbitrary imprisonment, executions, famine, malnutrition, illiteracy, unemployment, misery, separation, child slave labour, and discrimination based on race and sex.' The length of the list, he suggested, 'merely confirms that the human rights campaign is today's issue'.

So does the Universal Declaration of Human Rights simply scratch the surface? 'Certainly not', is the chorus heard from most of the journalists. In spite of everything, the view is that there has been a positive evolution. Even our Lebanese writer believes this though he feels that it is due less to the text of the Declaration itself than to the efforts of individuals and organisations inspired by that text. Others, acknowledging that the precepts contained in the declaration have frequently been violated, believe nonetheless that it is not a lost cause. Certain ideas and situations crop up frequently in the coverage: for instance the now

accepted role of 'civil society', more equitable justice in the future and the view that there should be greater respect for cultural differences. A journalist on *La Nación* (Argentina) wrote that, without human rights, it would be virtually unthinkable for General Pinochet to be faced with extradition to Spain

The abolition of slavery 150 years on

An apposite comment appeared in Le Mauricien on the anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In its 'Bloc-notes' section, the paper pointed to a close link between the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration and the 150th anniversary of the abolition of slavery in the region. It described commemorative events that had been staged during 1998 on the neighbouring island of Réunion to mark the end of slavery. But, despite the fact that this odious trade had been stamped out, Le Mauricien observed that racism was still rife. 'By condemning slavery as a crime against humanity, humankind looks set to make a qualitative leap into the third millennium.' It then went on to make a radical proposal. The 50th anniversary celebration of the Universal Declaration, it argued, should be the occasion for humanity to agree on 'compensation for the descendants of slaves, just as for the Jewish victims of the Nazis.' This, it said, would finally 'do justice to Africa for 500 years of under-development'. The reparations could 'take the form of the restoration of assets directly or indirectly appropriated by the slave traders.' Financial compensation would be channelled through the UN into a Solidarity Fund which would be used for the development, education and health of African peoples whose ancestors were forced into slavery'. This, according to Le Mauricien, would amount to a 'Marshall Plan' for Africa.

(see below). Likewise, Martin Luther King's campaign would have come to naught and the opinion of women would have counted for little in contemporary history. Nor would Rigoberta Menchú ever have been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. The balance, then, is positive, despite the great distance still to be travelled. Without doubt, human rights have gradually made it possible for the world's authoritarian and violent cultures to find more peaceful paths.

Naturally, many publications linked the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration with the arrest in London of the aforementioned Augusto Pinochet, the former dictator of Chile. And it was not just the Spanish-language press which homed in on this issue. *Le Jour*, in Côte d'Ivoire, took the view that the world would achieve major progress if Pinochet were indeed extradited to stand trial for the many crimes committed during his rule. 'Fear is currently changing sides', it wrote, 'since it will now be possible for dictators, in their lifetime, to be tried according to international law and to be judged by those who were their victims. African leaders who currently juggle with the law, rig elections, muzzle the press, imprison journalists, butcher political opponents, and allow populations to rot in misery and poverty will no longer be able to journey beyond their country's borders without experiencing the fear that they, too, might be brought before a critical judge who may call them to account'. *Listin Diario*, a Dominican Republic daily, wrote that 'the Pinochet case marks an evolution in law and is proof of progress towards an ideal human rights situation'.

An international court?

The Pinochet case and the decision by British Home Secretary, Jack Straw, to authorise the extradition of the former dictator were, in essence, an ideal springboard for a thorough discussion of the merits of an extra-territorial system of law and its association with a new generation of human rights – which are no longer constrained by frontiers. According to the Peruvian publication, *Caretas*, human dignity would thus take a further step forward. 'Up to about the 16th century, family law allowed a man

to kill his child if he thought that the latter had committed a serious crime. Closer to our times, Napoleonic law allowed a husband to kill his wife if she had been found guilty of adultery. Although these tyrannical practices went out with the advent of the nation state, a third stage now consists in progressing to a universal law, the main objective of which should be to punish any human acknowledged to have acted barbarously... The transition to democracy of the citizens of Chile does not have to be characterised by impunity and an eradication of memory. Similarly, we are not obliged to turn a blind eye to genital mutilation in Africa or the brutal marginalisation of women in certain Arab countries, because the value of the preservation of life is present in all cultures.'

Many editorial writers advocated an international system of law, independent of individual states and thus outside the jurisdiction of the United Nations. In Chile, however, the daily *El Mercurio* came up with a counter-blast. 'Spain's claim that it is competent to try former President Pinochet,' the paper argued, 'is clearly in violation of international law. Spain's conduct is, moreover, immoral because it is based not on universality but, rather, on the promotion of the power of the Spanish state in a dimension unheard of since the end of colonialism'. It concluded by saying that 'the problem is not one of acknowledging the universality of human rights, but of preventing Spain from commandeering this universality and its values to return to a new form of colonialism.'

This criticism of Spain by the editor of a conservative Chilean daily may be understandable. But it is worth pointing out that the journalists advocating an international court include some who stress that it must be genuinely independent. In other words, they also take the view that current human rights principles are a creation of the developed states. Their proposals reject the idea that the West can be the self-appointed conscience of the world, considering itself as the repository of all justice and human rights' values which have been conceived within a highly specific cultural context.

Campaigning for human rights

The commemoration of the Universal Declaration was an opportunity for a large number of human rights organisations and advocates to gather in Paris for the 'States-General', at the invitation of four NGOs (Amnesty International, The Fédération internationale des ligues des droits de l'homme, France-Libertés and ATD-Quart Monde). The theme of the meeting was how to help those who are struggling to uphold human rights in certain countries – in other words, defending the defenders. The meeting was attended by 300 people, some famous, others (deliberately) anonymous. They came to share their experiences and tell of their daily lives. There are parts of the world where it is risky merely to assist the victims of violations, far less to speak out publicly, write about or attempt to investigate certain practices. The scale of the problem was underlined in a range of workshops and briefings held over a period of four days – and which featured images of isolation, threats, imprisonment and discrimination in various forms.

Although these States-General led to the adoption of a text (the Declaration of Paris), no-one in the western press questioned the real power of organisations such as Amnesty, Reporters Sans Frontières or Human Rights Watch. Indeed, in their respective annual reports, negative comments can serve as nails in the coffins of states or institutions, all the more so given the coverage their analyses receive in other media.

Absent friends

For many of the southern hemisphere publications that were reviewed, there is a far more important challenge than simply setting-up an international court. They insist that the principles which ensure that human dignity is acknowledged should no longer be just words but should actually exist. There are frequent references in this context to economic, social and cultural rights, which were seen by many as 'absent friends at the anniversary celebrations'.

The point was particularly shrewdly put by the Tunisian weekly, *Réalités*, which spoke of a 'partial concept of human rights that deals exclusively with political rights, disregarding those others to which a citizen may legitimately aspire – namely the rights to work, knowledge and health.' The newspaper argued that so long as these remain unsatisfied, 'the very concept of human rights... is devoid of substance.'

Article 22 of the Universal Declaration in fact states that: 'Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realisation, through national effort and international cooperation and in accordance with the organisation and resources of each state, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality.' This is valid for all countries, rich or poor. Some

journalists suggested that the article simply reflects the old 'law of the market' in which money is all-powerful. Others pointed out that despite the commitment in Article 22, official development assistance is in decline and that the industrialised countries' earlier commitment to channel 0.7% of their GNP to development aid, is no longer even a vague promise on their part.

Zimbabwe's *Herald* was almost certainly right when it asserted that the country's citizens nowadays enjoy more and fuller rights than ever before. It went on to point out however, that respect for human rights was not an event but a process. The journal also regretted that human rights advocates tended to stress political and civil freedoms at the expense of other rights. According to the newspaper, it was therefore fitting that the 50th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights had as its theme: *All Human Rights for All*.

The basic message was clear. Economic, social and cultural rights exist on paper at Articles 23 to 27 of the Declaration, but there is a long way to go before they are translated into reality, particularly in the Third World. And so long as famine and poverty exist, millions of individuals will not have access even to that most basic right – the right to existence. ■ T.G.

Winning journalism

In the last issue of The Courier, we announced the most recent recipients of the Lorenzo Natali Prize for Journalism. Below, we reprint their winning articles (slightly abridged).

The Jury also commended four articles: by Supara Janchitfah (Bangkok Post), Joaquin Fernandez Nunez (Revista Expansion, Mexico), Lucy Johnston (The Observer, UK) and Michela Wrong (Financial Times, UK).

The prize-giving ceremony will take place in March in Brussels on the occasion of a round table discussion on investigative journalism.



Prison warders in horror tortures

by Robert Mugagga

An 18-year old youth, whose torture in an up-country prison late last year resulted in the amputation of his left leg, may also lose his right leg in the same way, *The Monitor* has learnt. Semwanga Godfrey, of Musozi village and formerly a student at Kiganda St Mugagga Secondary School was arrested on November 19, 1996 on allegations of having collaborated with a friend to steal two empty crates of soda belonging to one Norah Nawanki.

Narrating his ordeal to *The Monitor* yesterday from his sister's home in Nsambya Railways quarters, Semwanga said that immediately after being arrested and locked up in Musozi police post, the OC set him free having found him innocent according to the available evidence. But he was re-arrested from his home late at night by LDU personnel and some junior police officers and taken to Kiganda police post the following day.

'From Kiganda, I was transferred to Kasanda prison also in Mubende district whose Ssaza (county) court I was told would hear my case.' It was here that Semwanga suffered the mother of all tortures from the prison warders. 'Every morning we would be given 50 strokes each plus battering using iron bars. My first serious fate came when we were taken to work in the prison's maize plantation.' Semwanga said that due to hunger and fatigue, he at one time fell down and demanded water. According to him, this brought him trouble as he was immediately put aside, tied *Kandooya* and thoroughly beaten. 'One prison warder... instructed his boys to make sure that they concentrate the battering on joints all over my body which they did leaving me unconscious.'

Semwanga gained his senses when back in cells at night but was, the following morning, beaten again in the swollen wounds leaving his body bleeding profusely. 'This time they used a hammer to bang my feet. I saw two other prisoners badly beaten and left to die at a rubbish pit near the OC's house.'

Semwanga's bad condition later attracted the Kasanda OC, Badru Sekibenge who verbally blamed (the

warders) for torturing prisoners. 'When they told the OC that I was attempting to escape, he took things lightly, ordered another round of beating and later instructed them to take me to a nearby clinic.'

The Kasanda clinic nurse reportedly referred Semwanga to... hospital saying his condition was beyond her capability to handle. 'By then I could not walk and both my legs had started to rot,' he said. He was taken back to the cells and three days later only saved by the inspecting Mubende police OC, John Kataka who ordered him to be rushed to Mityana Hospital.

'Before being taken to Mityana hospital, I was seriously warned and instructed by (the)... prison warders to lie that I had met my fate in the hands of robbers whom I met when going to sell my cattle....'

When Semwanga's condition seriously deteriorated at Mityana Hospital where he had been admitted, his relatives were notified to come and look after him... From Mityana, Semwanga was referred to Mulago Hospital where he was admitted on December 8 last year and discharged three months later. But due to the worsening condition of his left leg, it was... amputated on July 7 this year.

'The pain in my remaining right leg is too much and keeps on coming now and then. I have been told that there is a possibility of amputating it also,' he told this reporter holding the artificial leg recently offered him at Mulago Hospital.

Meanwhile, *The Monitor* has learnt that Semwanga's colleague, one Byakatonda Faranswa with whom he was accused of stealing two empty crates of soda, was released in January this year, due to lack of evidence, by the Kasanda country court magistrate.

(This article was published in 'The Monitor', Uganda, on November 12, 1998)

Indonesian democracy lags behind economy

by Ole Damkjær

'Economic development brings increased democracy in its wake' is a mantra pronounced by Western leaders. But for the rulers of the world's fourth most populous country, this is far from being a law of nature.

The six-lane motorways in Indonesia's capital Jakarta, like so many others the length and breadth of this huge island republic, are choc-a-block with cars and motorcycles, many of them brand-new. Every day that passes they are joined by more. Since 1995 the number of motorcycles has shot up by 83%. And out in the villages, satellite dishes are springing up like mushrooms on a damp woodland floor.

The increased wealth among Indonesia's 200 million or so people is plain for all to see. Despite four years of war against the Dutch colonial power prior to independence in 1950, and virtual civil war in the mid-1960s which cost an estimated 500,000 Indonesians their lives, the country has developed at lightning speed: from a backward developing country to the biggest economy in a burgeoning South-East Asia – with 'only' 11% of the population below the poverty line as against 60% barely 25 years ago. By contrast, the country is moving towards democracy and greater respect for human rights at a veritable snail's pace: two steps forward and one step back.

Indonesia's controversial policy on occupied East Timor hit the headlines last autumn when two East Timorese human rights activists were awarded the Noble Peace Prize. But the outside world hears little about the political suppression in the rest of the country.

A popular mantra in our latitudes, namely that political freedom is a corollary of high growth and increased wealth is not a law of nature for Indonesia's rulers. But there is a creeping demand among the country's people for the political straitjacket to be eased, while neighbouring countries and the West look on with bated breath.

'Government yellow'

'The ruling Golkar party even determines the colour of the kerbstones', says opposition politician Daniel Raru in explaining how tight a grip the governing party, also called the New Order, has on power. In common with many other items of public property, the kerbstones are daubed canary yellow in many places in Indonesia, this being Golkar's colour. And in the last few months – in the run-up to the 29 May parliamentary elections – the colour yellow has been splashed everywhere in the Indonesian countryside, especially in the regions where resistance to the New Order is most vocal. Golkar, one of the world's longest-ruling parties, has been in power since 1971 when it was formed by Indonesia's undisputed leader over the last 30 years: General, Prime Minister and President *Haji Mohamed Suharto*. Suharto took over after the country's first president, Sukarno, had flirted with communism. Indonesia's rulers blithely use the communist spectre as a pretext for clamping down on the opposition.

The third prong of the trio making up the New Order is the army, which has an unusual dual role under the law. In addition to its normal military functions, it also takes part in all aspects of political and social life. Of the 500 MPs, only 400 are directly elected. The other seats are reserved for military personnel, who are also strongly represented in the People's Consultative Assembly. This is a kind of upper chamber charged with nominating the country's President – who in turn appoints half of the Assembly's members.

Strict censorship

The ruling trio's energetic programme to daub everything with Golkar yellow may appear a touch hysterical and unnecessary seeing that the government has already made it largely impossible for the opposition to win an election. First, the authorities only allow two other parties to take part in Indonesia's political life, namely the Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI) and the United Development Party (PPP). Second, Golkar sets strict bounds on the opposition's political activities. 'For example, the opposition may only engage in overt political activity in the official election campaign preceding the vote and only in certain areas', says *Dewi Fortuna Anwar*, a political analyst at the Centre for Political and Regional Studies in the Indonesian Institute of Sciences.

If the same restrictions do not apply to Golkar, this – says Anwar and other political observers – is because Golkar has quite deliberately not defined itself as a political party but as a blend of party and mass movement. This system, which was widespread in the Eastern European socialist regimes, entails for example that members of the trade unions and government employees are automatically members of Golkar. On top of this, the government decreed this year that the two opposition parties' radio and television election broadcasts should be approved in advance by the authorities.

Last year Golkar made sure that the more successful of the legal opposition parties was emasculated in advance of the elections. This was done by helping to split the PDI into two wings, only one of which – the 'government-friendly' one – has survived and is allowed to contest the polls. The other wing, under the leadership of *Megawati Sukarnoputri* (seen as Indonesia's answer to Burma's *Aung San Suu Kyi*), is not recognised as a party.

The ructions within Indonesia's democratic party and the government's meddling led to the worst riots in 20 years in the Indonesian capital and since then, the government has ratcheted up its control over political life, arresting 108 activists of whom 15 are accused of having threatened the state. For them the death sentence looms under Indonesia's controversial and highly elastic law on 'subversive activities'. The same accusation is now levelled against the leader of a small, independent and illegal party. Former MP *Sri Bintang Pamungkas* was recently arrested and accused of anti-government activities for inciting voters to boycott the elections.

In its latest report on Indonesia, entitled 'Arrests, torture and scare campaigns: the government's answer to criticism', *Amnesty International* expresses great concern about political suppression in the country. It notes that the government is taking a harder line now after easing up for a while; for example, three years ago it accepted the establishment of a National Human Rights Commission and Suharto announced a 'democra-



Foundations of a new hotel in an Indonesian beach resort. When Ole Damkjær wrote his winning piece (prior to the Asian economic crisis), Indonesia was developing at 'lightning speed'. But, he reported, progress towards democracy and human rights was 'at a veritable snail's pace'.

tisation' of the country after being re-elected in 1993 for the sixth time. A UN report earlier in the month identified Indonesia as one of the countries where a disturbingly high number of people had disappeared in recent years. The fear is that many have been imprisoned by the authorities.

Five guiding principles

The government's hard-line approach is also due to a series of bloody clashes in the last six months between Indonesia's myriad religious and ethnic groups. Muslims have burned down scores of churches and Buddhist temples, and on the island of Kalimantan the original inhabitants plundered and burnt houses owned by settlers from Indonesia's overpopulated main island, Java. Although the riots did not spread throughout the huge archipelago, and though the death toll was not alarming in a country with 200 million inhabitants, the unrest did lead to furrowed brows among the rulers in Jakarta.

'A complex society can be vulnerable to unrest if not managed in a responsible manner' said President Suharto in his New Year address. For that purpose – managing unrest in the widest sense of the term – Suharto has a weapon which has proved particularly effective hitherto. That weapon is *Pancasila* which is enshrined in the Indonesian constitution. It is a kind of unity ideology to which all parties and organisations – both political and religious – have to submit. The punishment is severe for anyone who opposes it and its five principles:

- Belief in the one true God
- Just and civilised humanism
- Indonesia's unity
- Democracy governed by inner wisdom and consultations leading to unanimity
- Social justice for the whole Indonesian people.

On paper, the five principles – which not even the People's Consultative Council can strike off Indonesia's constitution – seem attractive. For example, it is *Pancasila* which puts the country's absolutely dominant religion, Islam, and the minority creeds (Christianity, Hinduism and Buddhism), on an equal footing.

But in conjunction with the country's laws, *Pancasila* can be used for an almost arbitrary pursuit of

those who challenge the ruling order. This applies not only to the law on subversive activities, but also, for example, to Article 154 of the penal code which can sentence anyone who 'publicly expresses enmity, hate or contempt for the government' to seven years' imprisonment. In President Suharto's and the government's eyes, *Pancasila* is simply necessary to hold this huge... country together; (The East Timorese are not the only ones unhappy with the central government).

The President has made it clear on several occasions that human rights as we understand them in the West have to make way in Indonesia for stability, a precondition for the country's development. Suharto said recently that 'there are people who analyse our constitution through foreign eyes', adding that there is no room for differences of opinion in Indonesian politics.

Up to now the Indonesians have largely gone along with this, but the enforced political stability and the economic progress that stems from it have started to create 'a revolution of expectations', according to one Western diplomat. The widespread corruption and overt preferment of the small elite – including President Suharto's own children – have opened up a widening gulf of mistrust between the rulers and the ruled. The growing urban middle classes, but also increasingly well-off groups in the suburbs and in the country, have acquired a taste for more democracy and a change of system after three decades of Golkar and President Suharto.

Nervous neighbours

The political unrest is making Indonesia's neighbours nervous as this regional power in many ways sets the agenda in South-East Asia. Excessive political turbulence in the giant Indonesian archipelago, as large as the United States can have unpleasant reverberations in the other countries of the region which are also booming economically with a foot on the political brakes.

The West is keeping an eye on the political barometer in Indonesia, wondering whether the stability can last. This is not just because a country that boasts a wealth of raw materials, an attractive investment climate and a growing middle class with spending power is a magnet to foreign firms but also because Indonesia's future development is crucial to the West's efforts to establish a peaceful dialogue on trade and human rights with an increasingly self-confident South-East Asia. The outside world must therefore exercise considerable patience. And the growing number of politically-aware Indonesians cannot count on a change of system for the time being: not only because the ruling party is a sure-fire winner of the upcoming parliamentary elections, but also because President Suharto is expected to get another five-year term as Indonesia's undisputed leader when the People's Consultative Assembly 'elects' its new president in March 1998.

As he has done over the years, the 75-year-old Suharto skilfully avoids any hint as to when he will let go of the reins. He recently signalled his intention to stay, saying he would 'hit out hard' at anyone who tried to topple him.

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Road safety – a global concern

Road accidents are a common risk to life and limb that can happen to almost anyone, anywhere. Most of us know of someone who has either been killed or injured in a traffic accident. Generally unintended and preventable, they strike at unsuspecting victims caught in the wrong place at the wrong time. After a century of motoring, it is estimated that some 30 million people have died on the roads. The first pedestrian was killed in 1896 and the first driver fatality was recorded in 1898. Perception of road accidents as a major global affliction is beginning to draw the attention of international agencies and organisations to the fact that they should be treated on the same scale as other major threats to public health.

Current fatality and injury rates speak for themselves. According to the World Bank, road accidents currently result in 700,000 deaths and 10 million injuries every year. Indeed, for people between the ages of three and 35, road accidents are now the leading cause of death and disability. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), in its *'World Disasters Report 1998'*, presents a stark appraisal of the situation. Referring to the World Health Organisation (WHO) study, *'The Global Burden of Disease'*, it predicts that by 2020, road accidents will be the world's third leading cause of mortality, behind clinical depression and heart disease. By comparison, war and HIV/AIDS will rank eighth and tenth respectively.

It is in developing countries, according to the IFRC, that the situation is deteriorating most rapidly. 70% of global road fatalities occur in these countries and the proportion is still rising, with pedestrians and cyclists bearing the brunt. In Ethiopia, for example, every year there are an average of 192 road deaths per 10,000 cars. The figure for Ghana is 111. In Australia and Japan, it is just 1.9.

The toll exacted by traffic accidents in human, social and economic terms is high, and a major obstacle to progress. The death of an economically active family member can cost up to 25 working years in lost wages. As an IFRC expert put it: 'If you take a snapshot of a child in Latin

America, a child in Africa and a child in Asia, the single most common potential cause of death is a road accident... The consequences for the future productivity of a society are appalling'. While it may sound extreme, it is estimated that at least 1% of global GNP (\$53 billion) is lost through traffic accidents annually. Thus, efforts to expand and improve road infrastructures, as a means of gaining greater social and economic benefits, are being negated by the rapidly rising cost of accidents.

The forecasts appear equally bleak. World traffic volumes are expected to double between 1990 and 2020 and then double again by 2050 with the biggest increases occurring in developing countries. The effects will include even more traffic congestion and more hazardous conditions for road users.

The causes of traffic accidents, while multiple, are well known. They occur due to a variety of factors – human failings, the physical condition and design features of the road, and the condition of the vehicles. Human error is a major element:

70% of global road fatalities occur in developing countries

speeding, drunk driving, risk-taking, poor driving skills, overloaded vehicles, resistance to safety measures (such as seat-belts or helmets), and ignoring of traffic regulations all take their toll. Poor road safety awareness and knowledge on the part of pedestrians and cyclists is another major problem. Road safety education in schools and in the community is seen as very important. According to TRL (Transport Research Laboratory) UK, pedestrians in developing world cities are at greater risk than in the UK because most journeys are made on foot. Indeed, pedestrian fatalities account for 40% of all road deaths in Asian, Caribbean and African countries.

Improvements in vehicle design, occupant protection and maintenance have contributed significantly to accident reduction in industrialised countries. But in some places, the legislation does not keep pace with changes in technology and new methods that can make driving safer. Too many vehicles are ageing, poorly maintained or even unroad-worthy (with worn tyres, faulty brakes, defective lights etc). Sustained enforcement of the rules is important, both in keeping dangerous vehicles off the roads and in inducing drivers to behave responsibly.

Another significant factor is the quality of the road infrastructure. Simple safety devices, such as separated traffic lanes (especially to keep pedestrians away from commercial vehicles), improved road markings and clear signposting can all have an immediate and positive effect on safety, while improving traffic flows. Where accidents do occur, emergency medical services are vital. Survival rates are better if victims receive medical attention within the first hour after an accident.

The Courier



Accident prevention and road safety are not new ideas: the remedies for dealing with the problem are known. What is new is the growing consensus that effective concerted action is now becoming vital if the experts' pessimistic predictions, particularly where the developing world is concerned, are to be averted.

In the European Union, road accident levels have stabilised or declined over the last 30 years, despite increasing vehicle ownership. Road safety campaigns have become a staple part of efforts to boost awareness, and these have been accompanied by more demanding driver training requirements, tougher traffic laws and vehicle safety performance standards, and improved control of traffic flows. There is a range of ongoing initiatives, bringing together the public sector, industry and consumer representatives to tackle the problem. One example is the *EuroNCAP* (European New Car Assessment Programme) which aims to make vehicles safer for their occupants. However, even in Europe, it is acknowledged that there is room for improvement. There are still 45,000 fatalities and 1.6 million injuries annually on the EU's roads.

In Africa, Latin America and Asia, regional road safety conferences have also arrived at very similar conclusions. The third African Road Safety Conference, held in Pretoria in April 1997, came up with the following recommendations:

- sustainable transport policies;
- road safety programmes pulling together all the relevant actors into national road safety councils;
- road safety units to implement the operational activities of the programmes;
- cost-sharing between partners;
- improved interaction between politicians, professionals and researchers, aimed at identifying and sharing best practice; and,
- technology transfers adapted to the particular requirements of the beneficiary.

In the framework of support for transport under the Lomé accords, road safety considerations are also seen as a priority.

Working from the premise that 60 million fatalities and 60 million injuries as a result of road accidents over the next decade – with all their inherent impacts on society – are unacceptable, the World Bank is launching a new road safety programme. The *Global Road Safety Partnership* (GRSP) received its official launch in Washington, on 1 February, presided over by *James D. Wolfensohn*, President of the Bank.

Given the multiple causes of road accidents, and the need for sustained commitment, GRSP will establish a multi-sectoral and multi-disciplinary global network of international partners. This will bring together leading global

Uganda – more cars, more accidents

(Taken from World Bank Terms of Reference for developing a comprehensive national road safety programme).

The total number of vehicles using Uganda's road network increased from 50,000 in 1991 to 110,000 in 1996, representing an average annual growth rate of 24%. In addition, there are a large number of bicycles, pedestrians and animals using the roads. The increase in vehicular traffic took place with virtually no improvement in the capacity of either urban or rural roads. This has led to serious congestion in urban areas, especially Kampala City, and a higher incidence of accidents. Between 1990 and 1995, the number of accidents rose by about 20% annually. It is estimated that between 1% and 2% of GDP is lost as a result.

businesses, international donor agencies, development banks, NGOs, relevant national government departments, financial institutions, major research bodies and community representatives. It is designed to come up with strategies to tackle the root causes of the problem, particularly in developing countries, and to give support in implementing these strategies.

A benchmarking exercise is planned at the outset. This will bring together examples of successful best practice in road safety, taking account of the fact that in the North, attention is more focused on vehicle occupant safety while in the South, pedestrian safety is of more urgent concern. To achieve a sustained

commitment, GRSP aims to create incentives ('win-win' effects) in the shape of social and economic benefits for all the participants.

For example, GRSP could support partnership schemes that facilitate traffic regulation monitoring and enforcement. Manufacturers could provide equipment to police forces (on loan or lease initially) as well as training. The World Bank's involvement would be aimed at ensuring that the relevant government departments give priority to the initiative. Better enforcement, thanks to the use of the equipment, would raise revenue through fines and thus enable more equipment to be purchased. For the manufacturers, a new market would be opened up. Drivers would be more wary of violating traffic rules, fearing the penalties, and overall there would be improved road safety. Thus, a positive cycle of improvement could be started.

GRSP has attracted significant interest. A preparatory meeting held in Stuttgart on 11-12 January attracted more than 50 participants from various interested organisations. A representative of the international motoring federations (AIT and FIA) explained his interest in GRSP, stating that a lot of experience in the field of driver education had been developed in the northern hemisphere, and that there was considerable potential to 'export' this knowledge. An attractive aspect of this kind of know-how transfer is that it can have immediate and positive effects at a very low investment cost.

The global partnership is a clear indication that the world is beginning to recognise the huge social costs associated with road accidents. Given the long-term nature of the problem, some people are arguing for a further initiative – which would see 2000-2009 being declared by the UN as the 'Decade for Road Safety'.

C.O.

Country report

Djibouti

The waves of the Red Sea which wash Djibouti's northern coast, and the gentle lapping of the nearby Indian Ocean – which merge in the Gulf of Aden separating Africa from Arabia – cool and refresh in a way that those in the country's interior can only dream of. In this barren desert region, where rain and water supplies are rare and a lack of natural resources reduces the scope for sustainable development, the challenges facing the people have always been sizeable. There is a popular view that this part of the world 'must have been designed by the Creator when He was in a bad mood'. It is an idea that people express without fatalism, but it sums up the unpleasant and harsh side of nature in Djibouti.

Looking solely at the natural constraints, you might be tempted to think that there is nothing to be discovered, nothing to be done and nothing to be aspired to in this country of just 23,000 km² (about the size of an average province in a European country). The reality is very different. For this nation (formerly *French Somalia*, but renamed *The French Territory of the Afars and the Issas* in 1967, following a referendum), which gained independence as late as 1977, has an endless and indefinable ability to surprise. It has been the subject of many literary accounts replete with highly descriptive narratives and interesting anecdotes. Authors as diverse as *Rimbaud*, *Loti*, *Kessel*, *Theilhard de Chardin*, *Monfreid* and *Thesiger* have all, at some stage in their writing careers, been seduced by the mysteries of Djibouti. But even those who come without preconceptions, to take a fresh look at the place, have difficulty unravelling its complexities. A newcomer to the ranks of the writers is Djibouti's own *Wabéri*.

The traditional inhabitants of Djibouti are nomadic herdsman. The country's biggest asset, however, is its highly strategic geographical position – a fact which deserves to be publicised more. Located at one of the world's major 'crossroads', it has good access to important sea routes and a hinterland of landlocked countries with more than 100 million inhabitants. Throughout its history, Djibouti has been eyed greedily by both regional and international powers. Today, in a region where conflict and tensions – often clan-based – persist between and within states, Djibouti wants to recreate an 'island of peace'. It is not easy when the regional context is so problematic. This small nation even acts, under the aegis of IGAD (see box) and in other fora, as mediator in the crises that plague the Horn of Africa. It is a highly delicate position, given recent upheavals.



Sadly, the threat of war is always present in the region (and the situation is not helped by the *Khasmin*, the unbearable, sand-laden wind which sweeps through the country in summer).

If you look more closely at Djibouti's location you can see why people say it is 'caught between a rock and a hard place'. To the east lies Somalia which has degenerated into a kind of no man's land – without a government and subject to clan law. To the south and west are Ethiopia and Eritrea who crossed swords again in May 1998, and whose conflict rumbles on. Djibouti appears anxious to avoid taking sides, but when it was accused of passive complicity by the Asmara government, it decided, for the first time, to break off diplomatic relations with Eritrea. And it is not so long ago that Djibouti had its own armed conflict, pitting the government against Afar rebels. The fighting lasted three years and further exacerbated the country's problems. Since 1995, and the ending of the conflict by agreement in Geneva, there has been something of an economic revival, though tensions still exist.

A political model

Like many African countries that have adopted a multi-party system – whether voluntarily or under duress – Djibouti has found that the road towards democracy is a bumpy one. The uninitiated observer is likely to have a hard time understanding the complexity of the political scene even though

the population is estimated at not much more than half a million. The democratic evolution of the country has been influenced by a wide range of factors – historical, cultural, ethnic and regional – which make it particularly difficult to piece together the political jigsaw.

The death sentence for the single-party system, in place since independence, was pronounced in 1990. Thereafter, the way was cleared for the emergence of a new arrangement involving four legally recognised political groupings. At the time, there were some who argued forcibly for even greater political liberalisation and these people still criticise the fact that only four parties are authorised by law. The law in question is itself disputed, because it has not been published in the *Official Gazette*. Even without an increase in the number of parties, politics in Djibouti are byzantine. A Presidential election is due in May.

Although the armed conflict which began in 1991 sapped all sectors of the economy, one positive result was that it 'reconfigured' the nation's political scene. The 1994 peace

accords, signed between the government and a branch of the mainly Afar *Front for the Restoration of Unity and Democracy* (FRUD), led to official recognition of the latter as a political party in its own right. This gave it a bigger stake in the political process. There is still, however, an armed section of the FRUD movement led by *Ahmed Dini*, who is in exile in France. It wants a much more radical change in the *status quo*, and would like to see those currently at the helm ousted altogether. It intends to continue the struggle, and claims responsibility for periodic attacks on state targets in the north of the country.

The most recent legislative elections, which took place in December 1997, did not radically alter the composition of parliament. Under an agreement – actually reached after the elections – the 65 seats in the National Assembly are shared between just two parties in coalition. These are the Issa-dominated *People's Progress Movement* (RPP), led by President Aptidon, and the aforementioned faction of the FRUD, which signed up to the 1994 peace accords. Excluded by the electoral system, the other parties argue that the coalition is not legitimate. They see the arrangement as a political stratagem by those in power designed to consolidate their own position. The effect, they claim is to alter the democratic equilibrium and stifle wider debate and discussion.

As for the coming presidential poll, the big question is who will succeed President Aptidon, who recently announced his retirement from politics. (He gave no hint of his impending decision to us when we spoke to him – as readers will see from the interview which follows.)

There are rumours that the President's nephew and current *chef de cabinet*, *Ismael Omar Guelleh*, may stand as a candidate. The relationship between the two is such that, for some Djiboutians, he is the obvious heir apparent. Others are less certain that this will be the outcome. There are also rumours that, with the rise of a new generation of 'young Turks', hungry for power, the political pack will be reshuffled much more comprehensively.

The position of the opposition is even more difficult to unravel. Various alliances, inevitably set up on the basis of ethnic origin as well as political choices and calculations, attempt to function as best they can, but they are frequently beset by dissenting voices. Major splits, caused by dissident factions laying claim to control of the party, have emerged in both the main opposition groups not represented in the National Assembly – the *Party of Democratic Renewal* (PRD) and the *National Democratic Party* (PND). Some opposition leaders seek to play down the scale of the problem but it is difficult to imagine that these internal difficulties will not affect the

IGAD

The Inter-Governmental Authority on Drought and Desertification was created in 1986 by six East African countries (Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan and Uganda) with the intention of tackling drought and desertification on a regional basis. In 1996 it became the IGAD (Inter-Governmental Authority for Development). Eritrea joined in 1993. The leaders of the Member States decided to expand the mandate of the institution with a view to concerted action to address the other political, socio-economic and security issues affecting the region as a whole.

Three new priority areas are now included in its mandate:

- food security and environmental protection;
- economic cooperation;
- political and humanitarian issues.

IGAD has the following institutional structure:

- an Assembly of Heads of State and Government, which is the supreme decision-making body (meets once a year);
- a Council of Ministers (meets twice a year);
- a Committee of Ambassadors (meets on an ad-hoc basis);
- an Executive Secretariat whose headquarters are in Djibouti.

The institution aims to play an important role in harmonising political, commercial, agricultural and customs policy, as well as in the fields of transport, communication and the free movement of goods and people. In a region that is frequently prey to tension, IGAD has also become involved in promoting peace and stability, setting up mechanisms designed to prevent, manage or settle crises.

result of the forthcoming poll. Some observers believe that only a common front, embracing all opposition forces, stands any chance of toppling President Aptidon's 22-year-old regime. Others suggest that the opposition is still 'serving its apprenticeship' and that currently, there is no one in its ranks with the credibility and charisma needed to win. Not surprisingly, the main opposition leaders reject this kind of analysis. They are convinced that most voters already support their ideas and that they can win, if the elections are open and above board.

A difficult adjustment

Having long jibbed at swallowing the bitter medicine concocted in the laboratories of Washington DC, and administered to practi-



Yacine Elmi Bouh,
Minister of the
Economy and Finance.
*We have been forced
to adopt unpopular
measures and apply
strict management
principles in order to
control our spending*

cally all ailing economies, Djibouti finally decided in 1995, after lengthy talks, to accept the structural adjustment solution. This, according to the experts, was the only way of preventing irreparable damage to the country's economy. Admittedly, the three year-long conflict had damaged Djibouti's image as an oasis of peace in the Horn of Africa, and the immediate

post-war situation did not look too bright. Extra spending on military equipment and on maintaining troop levels had led to a big increase in public expenditure and the budget deficit had doubled to around 20% of GDP. It is not easy for a state in such a difficult fiscal situation to focus on vital sectors such as education and health, or to guarantee the continuity of public investment in order to maintain basic infrastructures. As Yacine Elmi Bouh, the Finance and Economics Minister, acknowledged to us: 'The country was in catastrophic decline, to the extent that the state's credibility was at stake.' The debt burden was growing and government purchase orders were no longer being accepted. Wage arrears were mounting up to such a degree that social stability was compromised. The government, in these circumstances, was forced to draw on the already depleted funds of public companies to honour its commitments.

Far-reaching structural reforms were needed. The first to be implemented by the government, with cautious support from international institutions, was aimed at immediate

stabilisation of the public finances. In addition, a programme designed to boost potentially profitable sectors was set up. Its purpose was to give a lift to the economy and ensure social stability. The standby agreement concluded in 1996 with the International Monetary Fund stipulated that the budget deficit had to be reduced through substantial cuts in the (huge) wage bill and stricter controls on spending. Despite some progress, the results have not been spectacular and the country has not fully succeeded in getting back on its feet in financial terms. For various reasons, it was not possible to meet the targets and deadlines set by the donors – proof that the damage of three years of civil war cannot be put right at a stroke. 'The funds we expected from international bodies were not released on time,' a government source claimed. And there were further unexpected complications due, among other things, to the organisation of the 1997 legislative election. All in all, Djibouti found it difficult to adapt to the rigours of budget austerity. The standby agreement therefore had to be renegotiated in Geneva in 1997. Although outsiders are convinced that the country's financial crisis cannot be resolved without rapid rationalisation of spending and a boost to revenues, the current rate of reform does not inspire optimism.

Budget stabilisation is a veritable Pandora's box. One of the thorniest issues, which is still a long way from being resolved, is spending on wages (half of which goes on the military and police forces). It is true that the number of public-sector employees is falling and civil servants' wages have been cut by 30%, but the demobilisation programme covering former soldiers (a stipulation of the Geneva agreements), which should have been completed by the end of 1998, is still not firing on all cylinders. This programme, affecting 16,000 veterans, was instigated in 1994 by the government itself, initially using its own funds. The financing was later boosted by France, the European Union and the African Development Bank (ADB). Out of a total of 9000 men, whose demobilisation was to be shared out equally between the three donors, barely half have been dealt with under the programme. Although France has fully honoured its commitment, the EU is still involved in the second stage of its programme. The ADB, meanwhile, dropped out at the last minute, claiming that its agreement was dependent on signature by the Djibouti government of an enhanced structural-adjustment facility with the IMF. This facility was expected to come into operation in early 1999. In the light of these problems, it is fairly clear that demobilisation will take longer than anticipated. It has even been suggested that some political or military leaders would like to push the deadlines back even further in pursuit of their own agendas. As for the demobilised soldiers, most receive bonuses of

between €1000 and €2500 – depending on their circumstances – before being left to their own devices. Unfortunately, from the outset, the demobilisation programme did not include a reintegration element. Negotiations are currently under way with the World Bank with a view to meeting this need.

The government is thus pursuing its stabilisation programme against a background of many constraints, although it is anxious to point to such progress as has already been made. 'We have been forced to adopt unpopular measures and demonstrate strict management principles to control our spending more effectively', Elmi Bouh stressed. The country is also trying to extricate itself from a deep-rooted 'everything public' culture and move towards a system of private management. The international consultants, *Price Waterhouse*, have examined a number of leading public companies that are teetering on the verge of collapse, to see whether they are suitable for conversion into limited companies. The Bretton Woods institutions now have the key sectors of electricity, water supply, telecommunications and transport, in

their sights, and are calling for partial privatisation.

Another cloud on Djibouti's economic horizon is the much publicised gradual withdrawal of French troops based in the country. This is the result of budget restrictions in France. Although opinion is divided about the benefits of this kind of cooperation, there is no doubt that the presence of up to 9000 French personnel has undoubtedly been good for Djibouti's revenues. France, for its part, has had 'unquantifiable' advantages from the arrangement which has been in place since independence. Djibouti is finding it difficult, in the post-Cold War era, to come to terms with the idea that cooperation should now be more impartial and perhaps based more on altruism. The authorities are seeking compensation from their erstwhile partners to make up for the losses incurred through personnel withdrawals.

Service industry comes to the economy's rescue

You could say that when Djibouti's transport sector sneezes, the whole economy catches cold. You only need to consider the size of the country and the relative importance of other economic sectors, to recognise the accuracy of this metaphor. At present, and for the foreseeable future, transport represents the country's best economic asset. On account of its exceptional geographical location at the crossroads of three continents, Djibouti enjoys a comparative advantage in this respect that other countries of the region must envy. It has long been a place of contact between civilisations, a gateway to East Africa, and a natural stopping off point for goods being traded in this part of the world, whether on the regional or international markets. But one has to ask whether Djibouti has genuinely made the most of its highly strategic position.

Looking at the current circumstances and the various socio-economic indicators, it is not easy to answer clearly in the affirmative. The transport sector has obviously generated revenue in Djibouti, but the conditions for optimising its potential have never been entirely fulfilled. Its success is closely linked to the volume of commercial traffic which, in turn depends on geopolitical issues and regional stability. The conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea, which broke out in early May 1998, provides a good practical illustration. Ethiopia, the much larger country, previously used the Eritrean port of Assab as one of its main outlets to the sea. After the fighting began, Ethiopian traders switched, whether through choice or because there was no other option, to the port of Djibouti. As far back as 1843, Emperor *Menelik* identified Djibouti as a natural outlet for Ethiopian trade. As a



Djibouti's railway station and port
Given the importance of transport to the relaunch of the economy, a new policy to boost the sector has just been outlined by the government



The Courier



Road between Djibouti and Addis Ababa.
Cracking up under the weight of juggernauts

result of the conflict, the volume of goods passing through Djibouti has doubled in the space of just a few months. Indeed, the government was forced to adopt a series of urgent measures to cope with the demand. 'No one could have foreseen what would happen', political leaders told us, while acknowledging that the dispute between their neighbours had obviously been profitable to Djibouti.

Given the importance of transport to the relaunch of the economy, a new policy to boost the sector has just been outlined by the government. It stresses the role and responsibility of the various institutional players, suggesting more active participation by economic operators in the private sector. The Ministry of Transport and Telecommunications has been entirely restructured and programmes aimed at training transport workers are currently being devised. 'Our ambition is to become the driving force behind regional integration', confirmed *Abdallah Abdillahi*, the new Transport Minister. Yet, without a strengthening of existing infrastructures and investment in modern stock, it is difficult to see how the existing multi-modal transport chain can be improved.

Until about a year ago, the port had the capacity to meet the international demand, and the operation made a vital contribution to the local and regional economy. However, it is now having to deal with a sharp increase in business. According to Mr Abdillahi, Djibouti has coped with the new situation, while continuing its main activity which is trans-shipment. It wants to consolidate its advantageous position, however, and with this in mind, a number of donors have been approached. The aim is to equip the port with new terminals, gantries, tugs, cranes and rolling stock.

As part of its triennial development plan (1999-2001), the government also envisages setting up an industrial freezone and a free airport/port facility to supplement the existing free trade zone. But the port also needs

to operate more efficiently if it is not to be loss-making. There are still considerable distortions when it comes to the price of certain port services (such as those relating to bulk goods) depending on whether they are destined for Djibouti or for transfer to Ethiopia. And efforts to make the whole operation more slick must also focus on modernising the port's management. Competition from the neighbouring ports of Assab and Aden remains keen.

The railway system, historically important to Djibouti and to its relations with Ethiopia, also faces difficulties. Currently, investment is being channelled towards improving rail services with the support of the EU and the French cooperation agency. But the needs are so great that the authorities are looking for further financing from donors. Some track sections desperately need to be repaired and there is a serious shortage of new locomotives to facilitate the transport of goods. This is a region where the railways are perceived as an important complement to road transport.

Aside from a few projects implemented with Japanese aid, the country's road network is in a poor state. The situation along the corridor that links Djibouti with Addis Ababa is a source of increasing concern. Roads are cracking up under the weight of the juggernauts that use the road every day. 70% of the section linking Djibouti with Ethiopia has all but disappeared and accidents are increasingly common. If something is not done in the very near future, there will be nothing left to repair!

Notwithstanding the scale of the problems to be tackled, the country's authorities and their partners in development agree that the tertiary sector offers the best prospects for boosting development and the welfare of the population. A thriving service sector is Djibouti's passport to success in the global economy. That is why they are putting so much effort into this area. ■

K.K.

'Living in peace and on good terms with our neighbours'

Interview with President Hassan Gouled Aptidon

Hassan Gouled Aptidon has been President since his country finally gained independence in 1977. He was actively involved in the independence process and is one of the few octogenarian leaders still in power in Africa. He is held in high regard by all – or almost all – his peers and is accorded the respect due to a veteran who still deploys his skills in mediating the crises that sadly continue to occur in Africa. He is a man who speaks his mind, and his direct style and skill at repartee are as sharp as ever. Some in Djibouti (notably in the opposition) have grown weary of asking him to step down. Others see him as the best person around to tackle potential conflict in the country. Presidential elections are due in April or May 1999. Will he bow out then or seek a final term? When The Courier went to press, we were still in suspense. The President kindly granted us a lengthy interview – but he was not to be drawn on his own political intentions.

In certain key sectors, such as transport, there has been increased activity in the last eight months. Is it too soon to speak of an upturn in the Djibouti economy, after several years of difficulty?

Djibouti's economy was very healthy, particularly in revenue terms, up until 1991. At that time, the situation unfortunately deteriorated because of the war we had to wage against the FRUD guerrillas in the north. We didn't really have any choice. We could not allow the guerillas to plunder the country and obviously had to fight to defend it. But this led to a big drain on the nation's reserves and our economy was ruined. Bridging the resulting financial gap was no easy task, so we approached the IMF and World Bank – which, as you know, are fairly strict in their dealings. They asked us to implement a number of reforms, starting with a reduction in the number of civil servants. We agreed to this and also cut wages by 12%. We hoped that the IMF and World Bank would look favourably on what we had done and would be quick to help. But we are still waiting for them to supply their aid to Djibouti. It is worth reminding you that we are in a special position because our currency is linked to the dollar, despite the fact that we have no oil and have a service-based economy. We urgently need additional resources if the situation is to be remedied.

The reforms point towards a gradual withdrawal by the state in favour of private investment. Is Djibouti ready for this?



So far, we have complied with the IMF and World Bank prescription. Indeed, a fact-finding mission was here as recently as last week, to assess the situation with a view to offering us support from the year 2000. In the meantime, however, we have to muddle through. And the reduction in the number of French troops stationed here has not helped. At present, a number of public enterprises are under the microscope with a view to possibly linking them with private partners. We are ready to tackle this reform of the public sector.

The IMF and World Bank require 'good governance' and better management of the public sector. Is Djibouti in a position to deliver this?

Absolutely! We have been working very hard in this area for two years now. The international institutions, which work according to their own rules, have become our advisers and auditors, but the methods they employ are very long and drawn out – though they are beginning to move a little faster. They are interested principally in economic rather than social issues. They tend to overlook questions such as unemployment and poverty.

The Universal Declaration on Human Rights is now 50 years old. What inspiration would you draw from this anniversary?

Preparations for commemorating this event are underway and I myself will be taking part. We fully support human rights principles. No person should be deprived of his rights. Our job is to ensure these are guaranteed. Djibouti will continue to play a part in furthering rights and freedoms throughout the world and particularly in this region. But let's be clear. There can be no real progress on human



The Courier

rights if the humiliation engendered by poverty is not addressed.

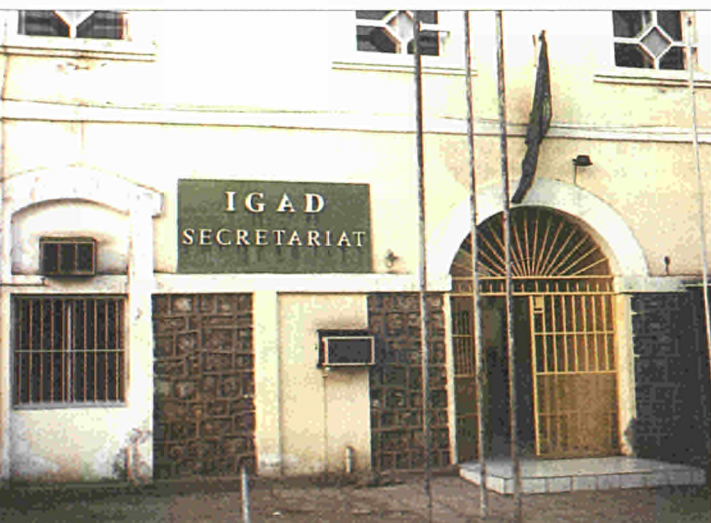
You are on record as disliking the idea of importing foreign solutions, particularly where democracy is concerned. How would you rate democratic progress in Djibouti?

That is a very interesting question. I think it is unfair to compare us with countries whose institutions are much older than ours. You cannot expect structures that are just 20 or 30 years old to deliver the same results. And remember that in some parts of Europe, you still find examples of what is tribalism in all but name. It is a big challenge for us, and we are certainly trying to adapt, but 30 years is too short a period. Djibouti used to have a single-party system and now it has four parties. That's progress in itself.

You have recently returned from Paris, where peace and security in Africa were the keynotes of the 20th Franco-African Summit. What lessons were you able to draw from this meeting?

The Paris meeting was very open. All those taking part expressed themselves freely. But problem-solving is obviously time-consuming and there is a long way to go before all the difficulties of our continent can be solved. There are some particularly intractable situations, notably in East and Central Africa, as well as in parts of West Africa. There is no way you can solve all the problems at a 48-hour summit, but at least we were able to open up discussions between opposing countries who were not previously on speaking terms. This is

The IGAD headquarters in Djibouti



The Courier

Makeshift dwellings near the capital.

'There can be no real progress on human rights if the humiliation engendered by poverty is not addressed.'

a very positive development. It is only through dialogue that solutions will be found. I firmly believe that the people of Africa will succeed in the end.

Security in the Horn of Africa is still precarious, despite a number of efforts at restoring peace. Indeed, Djibouti has just broken off diplomatic relations with Eritrea. What are the reasons for this?

It is not difficult to understand. First, Eritrea has been an independent nation with its own government for only seven years. During that time, it has been involved in conflict with most of its neighbours – Sudan, Yemen, Ethiopia and ourselves. Something has obviously not been working properly and the remedy has to be found in Eritrea itself. Take the example of their dispute with Yemen. Eritrea laid claim to the island of Hanish. This flew in the face of OAU, UN and Arab League texts which set out the principle that frontiers should remain intact after independence. As for their dispute with Ethiopia, as chairman of the IGAD conciliation committee, I shuttled back and forth between the two countries in an effort to find a solution. We asked the Eritreans to withdraw from the portion of Ethiopia's territory that they had occupied. At the same time, the Ethiopians were requested not to send troops to that region. We were met with outright refusal on the part of Eritrea. A fact-finding mission of four Foreign Ministers and four ambassadors was despatched to the region and we then attempted within the OAU mediation committee, on the basis of the results of the mission, to hear all those involved in the conflict. When it came to the turn of Eritrea's President, his response was to enter the room, look around in a supercilious manner and then say 'Djibouti and Hassan Gouled must leave this committee immediately. They are spies in the pay of Ethiopia'. I was obviously offended, and with good reason because I had put so much work into seeking an understanding between the two brother states. We could not simply ignore the insult, so we decided to break off diplomatic relations.

Are Eritrean citizens living in Djibouti suffering as a consequence?

I would stress that we have no problem with the Eritrean people. Citizens of that country may remain in Djibouti and will not be expelled. They will be treated just like our

own citizens and no one will bother them unless they themselves cause trouble. Incidentally, if Eritrea wants to ship its produce via Djibouti as Ethiopia does, it can do so, despite the dispute between us.

So you would confirm your position of neutrality in this conflict?

Yes, we have always been neutral in this affair.

Do you think there is any possibility of restoring the status quo in the near future?

Eritrea, as the 'guilty party', must understand its obligations to its neighbours. It must adopt a neighbourly attitude like everyone else, and must also withdraw the accusations levelled against Djibouti. We have been accused of shipping Ethiopian weapons through our country. If that is indeed the case, Eritrea has only to request the setting-up of an international commission of inquiry. We will doubtless restore diplomatic relations with Eritrea at some point in time, but not in the immediate future.

If I can return to the refugee issue, this seems to be creating problems for Djibouti. What would be a fair solution?

A UN institution is responsible for refugees throughout the world, but that institution is poorly managed.

At what level?

At all levels and in all places. It is possible to find solutions to refugee crises, but we should recognise that there are two categories – war refugees and social ones. The international institutions focus exclusively on the former. But we also need to develop solutions for the others, who do not wish to return to their countries.

Can you give me an example of a solution?

Solutions for this type of situation have been found in the past. For instance, as regards the Ethiopian refugees who were in Djibouti, we held tripartite talks with the UN High Commission for Refugees and Ethiopia. We organised a census of the people involved which included gathering information about their qualifications to help them find jobs in their areas of expertise. We also requested that food be distributed to them for a further year to make their integration back into society easier, and provided them with funds prior to their return.

Isn't that an expensive approach?

What choice do we have? It might be expensive, but it is governments that wage war, not refugees.



Ethiopian refugees.

'The international institutions focus exclusively on war refugees'

On this question of peace in the region, it is suggested in some circles that the people of Somalia should be left to solve their own problems. Do you think this is the right approach?

I should point out that linguistically, I am Somali myself. Solutions leading to peace and reunification can only be found in the country itself. Outside intervention counts for very little. The fact that a warlord gets hold of a few million francs or dollars from outside is not the real problem. A provisional government needs to be set up. Once that has been done, we will ask the Somalis, in the context of the IGAD, to submit urgent proposals for reconstruction and rehabilitation. We will then seek financing. Everyone will have to lend a hand, including the EU. But for all this to happen, the conditions must be right for peace – starting in the south of Somalia where the war began.

You mention IGAD. How can this institution realistically fulfil its role as guardian of peace in the region?

It cannot achieve concrete results if friendly countries do not help, particularly by responding to needs in the way I have just referred to. IGAD Member States are supposed to pay contributions and those that have not done so for two or three years are certainly not helping the organisation to function properly. Obviously, member countries that are at war are bound to face difficulties, but they must make an effort.

The armed faction of the FRUD sometimes carries out violent acts here in Djibouti. What is needed to establish complete peace here?

It is our responsibility to settle this. We ourselves found the solution to the problems that arose during the 1991-1994 conflict. In the course of our talks with the FRUD, we



The National Assembly building in Djibouti.
'We increased the number of representatives so that all ethnic groups, tribes and factions could be represented'

discovered that they wanted to be involved in government so we gave them ministerial positions. There are some who think that the way to gain power is to seize weapons and kill people. But that is no answer. After the accords were signed, we allowed them to set up a political party on equal terms with mine and they currently have about ten representatives in the National Assembly. But there were FRUD hardliners who were unwilling to sign up to the peace agreement. Some of their leaders now live abroad, from where they advocate terrorist attacks. I think it would be better for them to return to Djibouti and put themselves up for election. We have no objections to this, although the people are reluctant to accept any disorder.

How many political parties are actually permitted under the law? There seems to be some ambiguity?

The Constitution allows four parties. The question of whether the opposition should reconcile and reunite is a matter for them. I myself started with ten people and had to work hard to build up the party. They should be looking to solve their internal problems rather than simply pitching into one another.

How would you describe the relationship between the government and the opposition?

They are entitled to stand for election. And they are free to attack me politically – those are the rules of the game. But I reiterate that I will not accept any disruption of public order.

What about the parties not represented in the National Assembly?

Two parties are represented in the Assembly, the RPP and the FRUD. It is not my fault if the others did not win any seats. I would point out that there are currently 65 Assembly members. The usual figure is 40 but we increased the number so that all ethnic groups, tribes and factions could be represented and accommodated. There are not too many people in Djibouti who can say that their ethnic group is not represented in the National Assembly. Of course, we had to draw a line somewhere. We can hardly have a 100-member parliament for a country with only half a million inhabitants.

An important date in the calendar is the presidential election in 1999. There is already some talk about who your successor might be. If you decide to call it a day, what will your feelings be on leaving office?

I will always be around, whether I stay or go. And I will continue to work to promote peace and reconciliation.

But how do you envisage Djibouti after Hassan Gouled?

I have already told you, I'll always be here and I'll defend this country to the end.

What I meant was, when you are no longer in power.

Power counts for nothing. What matters is that the people know you, your habits, and your working methods. Potential candidates must be cautioned not to get involved in conflicts or to damage the interests of the people. I love my country and wherever I am, I will oppose anyone who causes trouble. I would like Djibouti to live in peace and on good terms with its neighbours.

You are known to support a reduction in the consumption of khat in Djibouti. Do you feel you have lost this particular battle?

I am indeed against the consumption of *khat*, because it causes a number of problems – it is very expensive and is harmful to health. It's very bitter – though you have to taste it to be able to talk knowledgeably about it. It enables you to daydream, but once the euphoria has worn off, you are back to square one. I have already made two attempts to suppress it, but each time, the security service responsible for seizing the drug sold it clandestinely back to people instead of burning it. I admit I have become discouraged. But there are some people who have begun to understand and who are now giving up the habit. If I could find a remedy – perhaps by subsidising countries that grow the crop and replacing it with other produce, it might be possible to achieve some success. Having said this, if Europe criticises us for our consumption of *khat*, we can respond by mentioning their consumption of alcohol.

Interview by
K.K.

Profile

General information

Area: 23,200 km²

Population: 680,000 (1998 estimate)

Population growth rate: 4.6% (1996 estimate)

Capital: Djibouti

Official language: French

Other languages: Somali, Afar, Arab

Religions: Muslim (94%), Christian (6%)

Politics

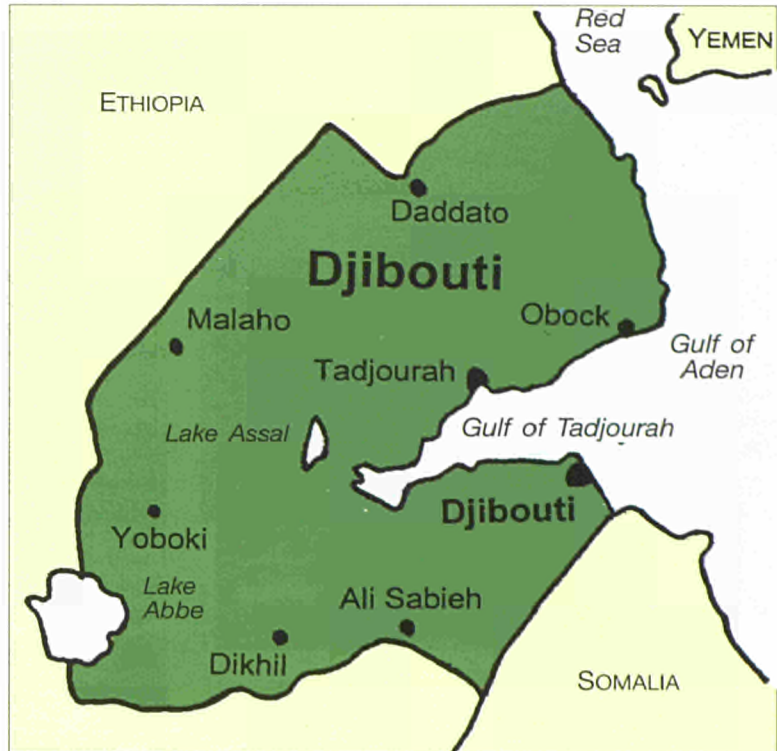
President: Hassan Gouled Aptidon

Prime Minister: Barkat Gourad Hamadou

Political system: Presidential. After several years of single-party rule, a referendum was held on 4 September 1992 leading to the introduction of multiparty politics.

There is a National Assembly with 65 members elected by universal suffrage for a five-year term. Two parties are currently represented in the Assembly, the RPP and the FRUD. These parties have formed an alliance in the legislature since the peace agreements of 1994. The last legislative elections were held in 1997. The President is elected for six years with the next election due in May 1999.

Political parties: Rassemblement populaire pour le progrès – RPP (Popular Assembly for Progress); Front pour la restauration de l'unité et de la démocratie – FRUD (Front for the Restoration of Unity and Democracy); Parti du renouveau démocratique – PRD



(Party of Democratic Renewal); Parti national démocratique – PND (National Democratic Party).

Economy

GDP per capita: about \$800 (1996 estimate)

Inflation rate: 4.2%

Currency: Djibouti Franc. Maintained at a fixed rate to the US dollar since 1973. \$1 = 178 FDB. €1 = 205 FDB (December 1998).

External debt: \$241million

Main exports: Livestock, animal skins, and coffee (entrepôt trade).

The service sectors generate the bulk of the country's income and are responsible for about 70% of GDP. Activity at the port of Djibouti is particularly important for the economy.

Social indicators

Life expectancy at birth: 49.2 years

Infant mortality: 112 per 1000 (1995 estimate)

Adult literacy rate: 46.2%

Enrolment in education: primary 44.4%; secondary 15.9%

Population with access to clean water: 53%

Unemployment rate: About 50% of the active population.

Human Development Index rating: 0.324 (162nd out of 174)

The Courier



Sources: Economic Intelligence Unit, UNDP Human Development Report (1998). EU-ACP Cooperation in 1997 (European Commission DG VIII).

Abdillahi Hamareiteh, Chairman of the PRD

'We won the last election'

The Democratic Renewal Party (PRD) was created in 1992, during a period of considerable turbulence in Djibouti. It has since been able to gain recognition and acceptance as one of the country's four legally authorised parties. Abdillahi Hamareiteh is currently its head. Despite the internal disturbances that currently divide the main opposition forces, including his own, he plans to continue moving in the direction of change, strengthened, in his words, by the 'enduring and undeniable support' enjoyed by the PRD. But he claims that the dice of the political game in Djibouti are loaded as a result of the systematic violation of democratic rules by the government. Here, he fires a number of salvos at the current holders of office. Will they hit home?



The Courier

According to some sources, the opposition in Djibouti lacks credibility. There are even those who suggest it barely exists. Is this true?

No, there is certainly an opposition in Djibouti. Our party, the PRD, won the most recent legislative elections in December 1997 with a substantial majority. We have proof of this. Two foreign journalists who monitored the polls closely have actually stated that the PRD received a substantial majority of the votes cast.

Despite the figures that you are claiming, your party is not represented in the National Assembly. Why is this?

This situation is clearly quite irregular, and is simply due to the fact that there is no justice in Djibouti – which is completely without human rights or democracy. Despite all assertions to the contrary, a single party still rules here. The official results published by the government actually allocated 37% of the votes in the legislative elections to the PRD. Even on the basis of these figures, we are the leading party. The RPP and the FRUD combined, officially won 63%. But we have a first-past-the-post, not a proportional electoral system. The electoral rules make no provision for an alliance between two parties of the type entered into by the RPP and the FRUD in order to beat the other parties. If there must be an alliance, it should be made during campaigning and not after the results have been announced. If the 63% obtained by these two parties were divided between them, the PRD would be the leading party.

Do you therefore consider this alliance to be illegal?

It is quite clearly illegal. We have already denounced it by submitting an appeal to the Constitutional Council. The President of that institution replied to our letter saying the alliance

was legal, despite all the constitutional and electoral provisions to the contrary. We also wrote to the President of the Republic, but he hardly responded at all. You must also understand that there is no division of powers in Djibouti. The legislature and judiciary are under the control of the executive. The country's supreme judge is the President of the Republic according to the Constitution. Many other powers are concentrated in his hands. He is, amongst other things, the head of government, the supreme commander of the armed forces and the head of security.

Assuming we accept your criticisms, how do you think it will be possible to move on from this situation?

If all this is to change, it will be necessary to form a transitional government of national salvation before the next elections. These proposals are included in the joint action programme that we drew up a few days ago with two other opposition groups. Such a government would have the task of re-establishing the rule of law, preparing for democratic and transparent presidential polls by establishing independent inspection arrangements, drawing up an economic policy to remove the barriers to free trade, and establishing a foreign policy of strict neutrality with regard to conflicts in the region.

Do you think that it is constitutionally acceptable to set up a transitional government of this type?

Yes, it is acceptable, especially with the support that we could receive from the European Union. We have, in fact, just sent a letter about this to the President of the European Commission. We want the EU to suspend all aid to the government of Djibouti until it agrees to national reconciliation and dialogue with the opposition parties and until democracy is introduced. The debates in the National Assembly are quite worthless, as the FRUD, which is considered to be the second biggest party in that forum, is not really a party at all. The real FRUD is led by Hamed Dini and is shoulder-to-shoulder with us. The others are a handful of dissidents whom we do not recognise. They started to negotiate with the government without even first satisfying the conditions necessary for registration as a party. It is all a manoeuvre by the party in power, and two of the FRUD dissidents have been given ministerial posts within the government.

Isn't there a danger that the numerous splits in the various opposition parties will reduce your chances, with the presidential elections only six months away?

We are trying to move closer together. That is why we have established this common platform



Meeting commemorating the 6th anniversary of the PRD

and have just issued a joint communiqué drawing attention to various subjects. We are also demanding an end to the government's frequent pressure on and interference in the opposition parties which is done with the aim of dividing them.

If an opposition party can be destabilised so easily, doesn't this show that it has a weak base?

No, not at all. The real problem is that the RPP and the FRUD received very few votes and they have continued to weaken since then. We are acutely aware that the opposition would win any legal and transparent election, as it has majority support. If these conditions are met as a result of the presence of international observers, journalists and, in particular, the EU, we will have nothing to fear.

While the splits may not affect the force of your arguments, they will undermine the ability of the opposition to mobilise, in the sense that your voters may become disillusioned. In these circumstances, what, in concrete terms, is the PRD's strategy?

We are guided by reality. 90% of the people oppose the way power is exercised. Our strategy is clear. There is only one PRD and one Chairman. We are not greatly concerned by interlopers because their position is not legal. I was elected by a majority of the party and we have confidence in our people, who know whom to trust. We have just celebrated our sixth anniversary and are moving forward. We would like the opposition, with all its conflicting trends, to reach agreement on a single candidate for the next presidential election. This would be a move towards the organisation of a common front by the opposition.

But this is not what is actually happening. Surely you need to act quickly.

It is true that we have very little time. That is why, between now and the start of next year, we will do everything in our power to enable this common opposition front to come into being. The document drawn up for this purpose still needs to be signed.

How can the transparency of the next elections be ensured, in your opinion?

For over a month now, we have been sending requests to every international organisation and friendly country, asking them to send observers and we are waiting to see what will arise from this. All aspects must be organised and monitored even before the electoral lists are revised, as malpractice generally occurs when the voters' rolls are drawn up – and we have proof of this. I have here, for example, a document showing some 10 entries made for one person with the

same name. That means that this individual probably voted 10 times. But the government has always refused to allow foreign observers to be present. We would like the EU to condemn this administra-

tion as it did in the case of Togo, as we have sufficient evidence. There is no justice, trade unions have been suppressed, their representatives have been fired from their jobs, human rights are being ignored on a regular basis and there is no freedom of expression. Even I, the Chairman of the PRD, which is the country's main party, have been sentenced twice. Once I received a custodial sentence of 10 days, which I served, and another time I was sentenced to six months in prison and a fine of two million Francs. This was for writing an article denouncing the dubious circumstances surrounding the purchase of equipment for the Djibouti electricity company.

On the subject of human rights, the government is about to commemorate the anniversary of the 1948 Universal Declaration. I presume, from what you have been saying, that you do not regard this as progress.

No, it's just play-acting. The decision to celebrate this event was taken outside any legal framework. In any case, it is taking place through the 'filter' of the religion of Islam and a type of Islamic propaganda under the iron rule of the 'Cadi' of Djibouti. All international and regional organisations are aware that human rights are not respected in Djibouti, and this anniversary is being celebrated in an attempt to disguise the true state of affairs and make people believe otherwise. If we, as the opposition party, had taken it upon ourselves to organise a peaceful and legal demonstration, we would have been met by truncheons. We are actually refused access to the media and our newspapers are often not allowed to appear for long periods. We therefore need to act before it is too late.

What is your position on the dispute between your country and Eritrea?

This situation is quite serious. It is effectively a problem between two individuals. It should have been possible to find an amicable solution without having to break off diplomatic relations. The position of the Djibouti government in this matter has never been clear, as we have noted the presence of the Ethiopian army on our territory. It might even be possible to say that it has actually taken sides. This is dangerous for Djibouti, as Eritrea might start to support the FRUD, for example. It is therefore essential to re-establish a dialogue with that country as soon as possible.

Interviewer: K.K.

An extreme form of escape

In Djibouti, it is approximately one in the afternoon. The sun is at its zenith, its rays mercilessly beating down on a city in a state of anticipation. No one risks looking skyward, not even to pray for a cloud for fear of coming into direct contact with the unbearable glare. The perspiration pours down people's faces and it is oppressively sultry. Everyone agrees that the temperature must be close to 35° and the thermometer confirms this. Yet they say that this is the time of year when the climate is most bearable!

But why the anticipation, which seems to be mounting? It is because people (or at least, the men) are looking forward to indulging in their favourite midday activity. *Ahmed*, his face radiant and with a hint of expectation, hurries out of the market place, slipping between the various stalls and skilfully avoiding the deafening traffic. You can hardly fail to notice the strange bunch of freshly cut and carefully bound green leaves he is carrying. He is hurrying to find a quieter spot, his gait unhampered by the traditional loincloth that is expertly

tied about him. Like many men, he has just purchased his daily ration of *khat*, an intoxicating herb which is regularly consumed in this region of the Horn of Africa. Ethiopia provides fertile land for its cultivation and traders ensure a regular daily supply to Djibouti. Here, according to some observers, *khat* consumption has acquired an almost religious significance. It is a rite embedded in the region's history and culture and an integral part of the people's daily existence.

An hour and a half later, the scene in the town of Djibouti undergoes a transformation. It all happens very quickly, as if the cast of inhabitants are eager to start the second act of their carefully staged play without lowering the curtain on the previous scene. Streets that were teeming with people rapidly empty. Only a few late-comers in search of the precious leaves are left standing at the stallholders' tables. The *khat* stocks are low and all that remains are leftovers of dubious quality – to be purchased by the less affluent. Here and there, beggars test the generosity of what they hope are charitable souls, in the hope of gleaning two or three sprigs of the plant with 'magical powers' before they leave the city to its torpor.

Bundles of freshly cut *khat*



The Courier

On the verge of the unreal

Most of the male population is now closeted indoors, inside the *mabrazé*. This word, originally borrowed from Arabic literature and now part of everyday vocabulary in Djibouti, denotes the intimate location or space where *khat* users meet. It is where friends gather to 'browse', like herbivores, the leaves of the sacred plant. The taste is bitter but users show no sign of repugnance. Within a few minutes, they are transported into a world where opposites become fused – real and unreal, concrete and abstract, tangible and metaphysical, hallucination and reality, utopian and rational. The hold that the plant gains over the brains of those who chew it is transient but it is said to produce a series of spellbinding, captivating and wonderful images.

This is the 'magical time' of the *mirghan*, which is the name given to the state of euphoria brought on initially by consuming *khat*. It is said that, in this state, all notion of time is lost – with the past, present and future continually overlapping. The ability to reason is also greatly diminished and only dire necessity or a matter of life and death can bring it flooding back. The initial



The Courier

period of verbal jousting then gives way to idleness, indolence and lethargy.

It was the author, *Jean Rostand*, who wrote that 'the wisdom of instinct guards against the immoderation of reason'. This could well be a description of the transition into second phase, as 'wisdom' gradually returns. By now, it may well be as late as eight in the evening. The bottles of Coca-Cola and cups of tea which customarily accompany chewing are long empty. Its energy spent, the sun has stealthily slipped beyond the horizon, to cast its fierce rays on some other part of the globe. The 'mabraze party' comes to an end for some – and their return to earth seems a painful injustice. It is time for them to go back home to their families. Others will continue with khat-inspired discussions long into the night, before wending their way home-wards to where another, no less strange world awaits them – that of sleep and of dreams.

It should be stressed that not all the people of Djibouti take refuge in the *mabraze*. Some choose instead to chew on their khat in solitude, sitting on the corner of the street. Others actually carry on with their work, a small greenish ball of *khat* tucked into the corners of their mouths (this produces a swelling not unlike what happens when one has acute toothache). It seems, however, that very few are able to work under the influence of khat. Of course, in Djibouti, people are not ex-

Central Djibouti
'Streets that were teeming with people rapidly empty'

pected to labour during the hot afternoons. The working day officially begins at seven in the morning and ends around one or, perhaps at the latest, two in the afternoon. But from midday onwards, involuntary reflexes – behaviour conditioned by the idea of khat – are evident, revealing the first signs of a prelude to an afternoon of 'browsing'.

Khat controversy

It is said that about 98% of men indulge in the practice of khat-chewing, and the age at which they start is reported to be getting younger and younger. Women are also gradually being converted to its use, although there are still very few who indulge. The drug (for that is what it is) undoubtedly offers an easy way of escape for people with little to do and few prospects. In the past, the rule was that you could only consume khat on one day a week – Thursday. But it proved impossible to hold the line and its use has spread, aided by a tolerance and familiarity that has developed over the years.

There is no doubt that the *mabraze* is and will remain a convivial place where ties of friendship are strengthened and where a

sense of communal life develops. There are those who would argue that it represents a particular manifestation of African solidarity – akin, say, to the discussions held on other parts of the continent in the shade of the *baobab* tree. It is a place where people can express their opinions and resolve their conflicts. Indeed, businessmen sometimes choose this setting to address their problems calmly, since as we indicated, the heights of transcendental escape are then followed by a period of calm. This, so the argument goes, may actually facilitate discussion and enable things to be seen more clearly. There are even suggestions that high-level decisions are sometimes taken under the influence of this intoxicant.

Khat may well bring a sense of euphoria and well-being to those who indulge the habit, but it also has a very high socio-economic cost. Every day, no fewer than 11 tonnes of the crop are imported into Djibouti. Or to put it in terms of hard cash, the trade represents an annual foreign-exchange outflow for this small country of € 15.5 million. The import taxes levied on the product do little to counterbalance the loss of what is a significant proportion of the money in circulation. The people who run the business are said to be single-minded and highly organised – qualities which would undoubtedly be an asset to the country were they put to other, more productive purposes. The khat arrives in Djibouti at around eleven every morning, in a specially chartered plane. In a matter of hours, the country's various regions have been supplied through extremely efficient local distribution networks.

The trouble is that the cost of the plant is high when set against the disposable income of the average Djibouti family. It is said that some people consume no less

than € 25-worth of khat every day. And there are studies which indicate that the average (male) head of household spends more than 40% of the monthly budget on khat. Such high expenditure, on what is essentially a recreational drug, can obviously affect the stability of family relationships, and divert resources that could be used, among other things, for children's education. The President of the Republic, who is well-known for his aversion to the plant, suggested to us that an increase in the number of divorces in Djibouti appeared to be directly linked to the practice of chewing khat. He also believes that work and productivity may be adversely affected. (In neighbouring Yemen, it is said that the situation is somewhat different – here, people have the habit of consuming the intoxicating plant whilst working). Then there are the potentially harmful health effects. According to some scientific studies, regular consumption of khat can cause long-term damage, notably to the digestive system. It is said to be a cause of ulcers, anorexia and intestinal disorders. Cardiovascular and even neurological effects have been reported, according to one disillusioned young Djiboutian woman we spoke to. Women who 'browse' are thought to be particularly vulnerable to associated ailments, especially if they are pregnant.

There is a widespread assumption that no-one would dare to ban the plant nowadays, for fear of provoking civil disturbances. A privately-run local paper has, nonetheless, been forthright in condemning the persistence of the phenomenon. 'By valuing khat above all else, society has chosen to favour illusion over reality, an easy life over effort, and uniformity over the expression of personality'. The counter-argument of those who would defend the habit is that moments of illusion have always been man's favoured means of escape. It is only the method of achieving escapism that has varied, depending on the period in history or the type of society in question.

The greatest artists, writers, philosophers, poets, musicians, painters and dancers may well depend on this kind of illusion (not necessarily drug-induced!) to be inspired to produce their greatest works. The trouble with khat is that the need for illusion may well become insatiable. You are on a slippery slope when too much is never enough! ■

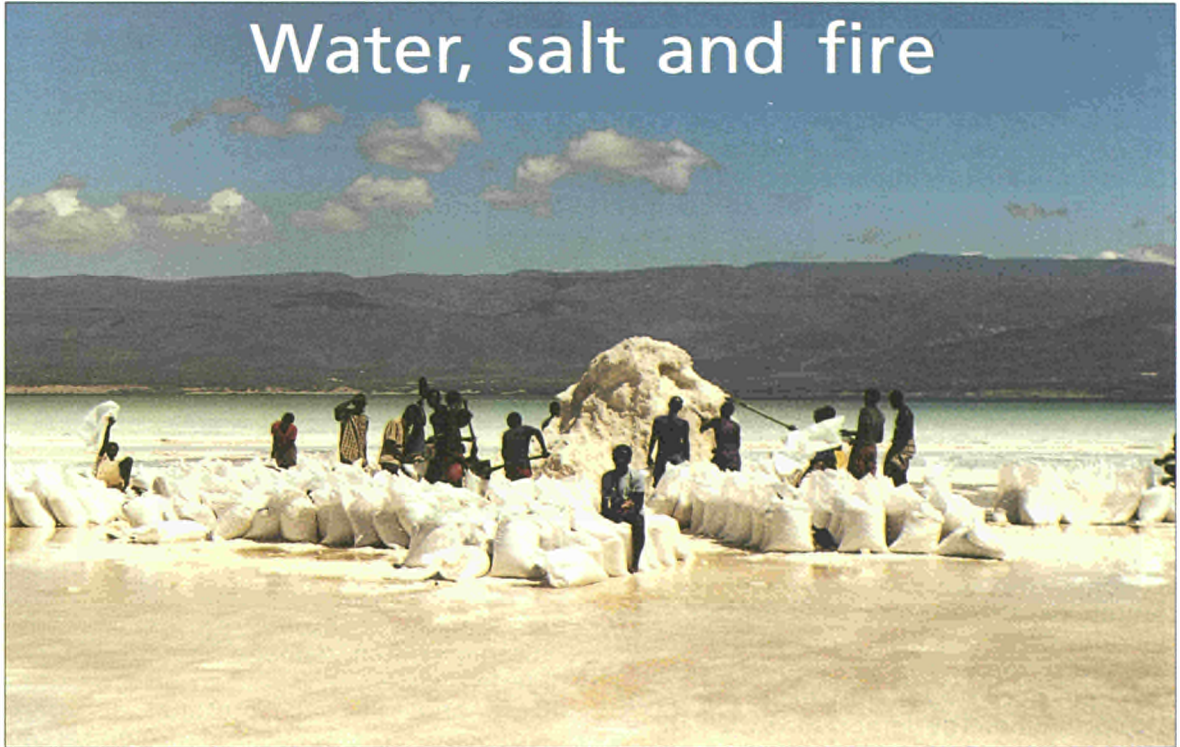
K.K.

High household expenditure on khat means less money for other areas – including children's education



The Courier

Water, salt and fire



The Courier

If you are the kind of person who looks for something a little out of the ordinary when deciding where to go on holiday (unexpected charms or unfamiliar landscapes) then Djibouti may well have something to offer you. For this little country in the Horn of Africa, one of the less well-trodden tourist destinations of the planet, has some fascinating sites and a landscape that is surprisingly multicoloured. And you can learn how an apparently barren terrain yields unexpected riches, both visual and economic (the latter having been exploited by mankind for centuries in his unending quest for survival).

A glittering jewel – with a sprinkling of salt

We are in the region of *Lake Assal*: an extraordinary work of creation. Unlike the many mirages to be seen along the road that brings us here, the splendour of the lake itself is solid and tangible. When, at a distance, you first catch sight of the sharp prism of reflected light, you cannot help but draw your breath. Experts say there are only two or three natural wonders like this in the world. The lake lies 155 metres below sea level, in the Afar country, and it is a stretch of water that one could gaze at indefinitely. All day long, the colours on the surface change and mingle. Passing caravaneers add their own touch of picturesque charm to the beauty of the place. For them, the lake is a familiar landmark and they only give it a passing glance.

Harvesting salt from the Lake Assal bank

Assal may provide a visual feast, but it also has an economic significance. Salt, one of the world's oldest strategic commodities, is found here in abundance, and it still attracts fortune seekers.

We visit a location where a huge white bank of salt and gypsum substitutes for the fine sand of the traditional lakeside. It is a place that is increasingly popular with tourists and there has even been a debate about whether UNESCO should be approached to classify it as a world heritage site. But the most notable development in recent months has been a sudden rush of Djiboutians keen to exploit this rich vein of 'white gold'. Salt extraction has increased sharply in recent months. Traditionally, the salt pan was worked by nomadic Afars on a completely non-industrial basis. The mineral was collected and carried by camel to Ethiopia, where it was bartered for other foodstuffs such as wheat or corn. Indeed, the salt trade is part of this region's historical fabric. For centuries, people in the surrounding area made regular trips here for fresh supplies.

One reason for the recent increase in the exploitation of salt is the hostilities between two of Djibouti's neighbours. Before May 1998, Ethiopia obtained much of its salt from Eritrea, but the trade has been hit by the political (and military) crisis and Ethiopia has turned to Djibouti instead.

To prevent uncontrolled exploitation and safeguard the environmental and tourist attractions

Trucks laden with salt setting off for Ethiopia



The Courier



The Courier

Instruments for measuring volcanic activity

of the site, the government has had to limit the number of permits granted. At present, five or so industrial companies are legally exploiting Lake Assal salt. Parcels of land have been clearly marked off, and each company is trying to confine its activities to its own area. Work begins very early in the morning, when huge bulldozers collect the salt and pile it into heaps. Hordes of local workmen then descend on these, armed with picks and shovels. Their job is to collect and bag the salt. Later, they load it on to lorries bound for Ethiopia. For the great majority of these workers, the labour is hard and unpleasant. They work in the full glare of the blazing sun and the temperature here can easily reach 45 degrees centigrade during the hot season. And then there is the salt itself, in which they wade for hours at a time. After a while, this provokes stinging in the eyes and it can

cause skin irritations that make the job even more difficult. These tough workmen are paid according to the number of trucks they load. We were told by an official of *Société d'Exploitation du Lac*, one of the five state-approved companies, that their monthly earnings average about 40,000 Djiboutian francs. This compares with the national average income of around 17,000 francs.

As a result of the salt workings, a small lakeside village has sprung up. The population of this settlement has now reached 2000 and it is expected to continue growing. Although 100,000 tonnes of salt are being extracted from the lake every month, the operation appears to have a secure future. The salt bank is 40 metres deep in places, and the mineral is said to replenish itself, as if by magic. The small-scale miners, meanwhile, have been given new areas within which to continue harvesting the salt that provides their livelihood. They come down to the lake at first light, with their caravans of camels, to collect their valuable harvest before disappearing back into the mountains.

Ardoukoba

The noted vulcanologist *Haroun Tazief* described Djibouti as an 'open-air geology textbook', with its bizarre seismic phenomena, the grandeur of its basalt rocks and its smoking fumaroles. The country is still a magnet for the world's experts in the field. Without troubling the activities of the salt workers, the impressive volcano *Ardoukoba*, with its dark ridges towering above Lake Assal, seems to stand guard over the lake's tranquility. The presence of the magnificent *Goubet-al-Karab*, a pocket of water that

'An open-air geology textbook' was Haroun Tazief's verdict on Djibouti



The Courier

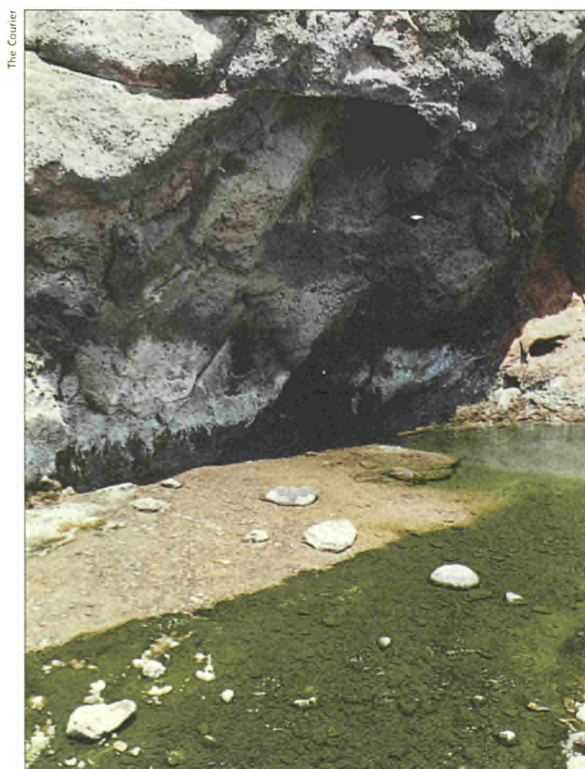


The Courier

stretches away to the Gulf of *Tadjoura* in the east of the country, may serve as a reminder to this fiery giant that it is not the unchallenged master of this untamed land.

The volcano last erupted in November 1978 (as if paying its own tribute to Djibouti's independence which occurred the previous year). Geologists who examined the movements in the fault line that accompanied this seismic event reported that the effect was to separate the African continent from the Arabian peninsula by a metre or more. Indeed, according to some geophysical studies, the whole of the Horn of Africa will soon split away from the continent.

Algae growth in the boiling waters of Ardoukoba



The Courier

The magnificent pocket of water known as Goubet-al-Karab

Soon, that is, in geological time, which means perhaps in a few thousand years! There is no human force capable of preventing this continental drift, and it is something that does not seem to concern the inhabitants of the region unduly

From a distance, Ardoukoba itself appears equally indifferent to the predictions of future cataclysm. Wedged between the water and the salt, and draped in its robe of black rock, it dominates the landscape. But a closer inspection offers hints of its latent violence. There are the lava flows, now solidified, which emphasise the areas violent geological history. And there signs of 'life' around the base of the monolith – occasional pockets of boiling water still bubbling away. It is a sure sign that the giant may not yet have uttered its final word. Although the scientists do not expect any immediate resumption of volcanic activity, they know that Ardoukoba could well decide to prove them wrong- without giving too much notice. Equipment for measuring seismic activity has been installed in the area by specialists from the *Arta* Observatory, who record a variety of physical parameters and provide regular reports on the volcano's mood. Perhaps the day will come when the power of the volcano can be harnessed to aid the country's development? The science may not be sufficiently advanced at the moment, but quite a few people have spotted the potential for exploiting geothermics, and more and more thought is being given to how this might be done. ■

K.K.

Quenching a nation's thirst

Recent World Bank studies suggest that Djibouti, like other countries in arid zones, could experience a water shortage in the next ten years. Such forecasts underline the scale of the task facing the government of this country – where surface resources of drinking water are almost non-existent. In the capital, where most of Djibouti's people live, development is proceeding apace and as a result, the gap between supply of and demand for water is continuing to grow. In the largely arid and inhospitable rural areas, where the population is scattered and poor, the problem is even more acute. In some places, even ground-water supplies are drying up. If the people are to achieve even a minimum level of development, they need to be provided with convenient access to water.

In a project entitled 'Creation or renewal of 61 rural drinking-water stations', the EU is seeking, in close collaboration with the local authorities, to increase the availability of water in the countryside. The first stage involves improving supplies from existing water sources. Subsequently, new water-catchment schemes will be examined.

Easing the pressure on the population

Despite the fact that it still has an essentially service-based economy, Djibouti needs to devote attention to maximising the resources of the rural sector. Agriculture's contribution to the overall economy is currently stagnant at around 5% of GDP. One of the government's concerns is to boost this sector, despite the various problems it faces. The long-term aim is to stem the mass influx of people from the countryside to the city of Djibouti. This cannot be achieved without an improvement in the day-to-day living conditions of those living in the hinterland. And improving access to water is vital if there is to be a genuine boom in rural devel-

opment. The arid climate has had other socio-economic impacts which need to be tackled. This semi-desert environment is, by definition, hostile, but the situation has been exacerbated over the last 15 years because of successive droughts. These have had disastrous consequences for the people of the area. The lack of water and uncontrolled grazing have caused the land to deteriorate and livestock numbers have progressively diminished. Even the development of small, subsistence-level farming has been curtailed. In these circumstances, economic progress has hardly been feasible.

'Water is life' is the succinct slogan used by the Djibouti National Water Authority. It is a message which is powerful in its very simplicity. Lives and livelihoods are both at stake in this austere region. The EU programme (costing €6.1 million overall), which was begun under Lomé III, involves restoring and maintaining pumping stations, drilling more bore holes and, above all, sinking wells and building surface-water stations. According to initial forecasts, these schemes should enable at least 50% of the water requirements of nomadic stockmen – who are the majority of the rural population – to be satisfied. The first phase of the programme has already been completed and, after an interlude of a few months, 1998 saw the commencement of stage two. This is being supervised by Djibouti's Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and is being implemented by the local rural engineering service. The latter is in the process of constructing about 30 wells in a variety of rural locations.

Even once the final stage has been completed, it will take some time before the results can be fully assessed – in terms of the impact on the daily lives of the people who live here. Already, however, there are indications that some of the objectives have been achieved. In the *Dikhil* region in the south of the country, which *The Courier* visited, several



types of water station have been constructed. These include wells that are open at ground level and others with a cement wall surround. The style chosen depends on the requirements of the users. The wells are located across the drought-stricken lands, and they have been warmly welcomed by the local inhabitants. 'Our greatest enemy here is thirst', one local man told us. 'With these water stations, we can now get our supplies and water our livestock.' He did say, however, that there was a problem with herds from areas nearer the border who were being driven to his locality in search of water. The few ground water sources that have been discovered here have been found to have very low salt levels compared with those of the capital, making the water even more wholesome. In time, a progressive build-up of the national herd could lead to the recommencement of animal exports.

One sign of an upturn in this region is that villages which, in the past, had only a few in-

Cement well in the *Dikhil* region





Solar collectors provide the power supply to pumping equipment



Information briefings have been provided for recipient populations

habitants, are now beginning to see their populations increase. Some are branching out into market-gardening, to increase their income. *Ibrahim*, for example, has managed to grow watermelons, onions, green peppers and tomatoes. A part of the crop will be put aside to feed his family and the rest will be sold in the village. 'This type of activity was difficult before the water stations were built', another villager told us. He also spoke of a friend who, some years ago, had invested heavily in a large garden, to grow vegetables. Sadly, his efforts had come to naught because the water supply was insufficient.

Another beneficial effect of the EU-funded programme is that people do not have to travel so far to obtain water and they are less dependent on tanker lorries. In some places, it has been possible to pump water from boreholes to the surface, giving schools a supply from the tap. Solar panels (there is no shortage of sun here) have been installed to provide the power needed for the pumping

equipment. The village we visited was relatively accessible but more remote districts of the country have also benefited from the scheme.

One of the local engineers responsible for implementing the programme in the field told us there were now some signs of a move away from nomadic existence towards fixed settlements. In view of this trend, he believes that water stations should be built wherever exploitable water sources are identified.

The EU programme also puts emphasis on actively involving local people in the smooth running and upkeep of the water stations. Information briefings have been given on the subject and, further on in the process, institutional support is offered to the various parties involved in implementing the project at national level.

Despite the fact that programmes of this nature are being executed, there is a need to take even more seriously the threat of a water shortage in Djibouti. Research to detect

and exploit untapped resources in the country's interior is currently low on the country's list of priorities. Meanwhile, according to experts, the use of sea water would require desalination technology which is even more expensive. At the moment, there is a lot of talk about an aquifer which has been discovered in the *Hanlé* region. Some Djiboutians believe that this could supply the entire country, including the capital. However, this is still just a pipe-dream. Turning it into reality would require expensive and time-consuming investment in a large-scale engineering project. In the meantime, the various water stations set up in the hinterland are helping to promote an upturn in rural activity – and in the process, are rekindling hopes for a brighter future. K.K.

Djibouti-EU cooperation 1990-2000

Lomé Convention	7th EDF (€m)	Priority sectors	8th EDF (€m)	Priority sectors
National Indicative Programme (NIP)	17,5		22,0	– Transport – Social sectors – Education
Regional funds	194,0 (for the whole region)	– Transport and communications – Food security – Trade and investment development	150,0 (for the whole region)	– Transport – Food security and conservation of natural resources – Development of human resources – The fight against poverty
Structural adjustment support	7,1	– Demobilisation of police and army personnel – Internal debt relief	5,9	– Demobilisation – Support to the state budget in the fields of national education and internal debt relief
EIB resources	2,5	– Human resource development	2,5	– Infrastructure development – Private sector development

Country report

Swaziland



Swaziland is a small landlocked country in Southern Africa, surrounded by South Africa on three sides, with Mozambique to the north. With an area of 17,364 km², it is one of the smallest African states. It gained its independence from Britain in 1968, as a constitutional monarchy. However, *King Sobhuza II* (the current monarch's father), who had acceded to the throne in 1921, soon suspended the Constitution and banned all political parties – an event sometimes referred to as 'the king's coup'. Very much a traditionalist, he believed that the Westminster-style system he had inherited (or which had been imposed upon him) was unsuited to his country, and that political parties were divisive. He was a legendary figure who commanded much respect, but despite this, the issue of which form of government best suits the country has never really gone away. The current monarch, *Mswati III*, has moved some way from the absolute monarchy of his father, and has instituted a number of reforms.

Tinkhundla

When King Sobhuza II restored a bicameral parliament in 1978, he introduced the *tinkhundla* system of government, which is designed to blend western democracy with Swaziland's own traditional structures. *Tinkhundla* is the plural of *inkhundla*, which means a meeting place, and the term applies to rural centres of administration. Members of Parliament were chosen from among candidates nominated by the *tinkhundla* whose names were put to the King for his approval (or otherwise). It is generally acknowledged, however, that during Sobhuza's reign, the Parliament had very little power. The monarch tended, instead, to rely on his advisory body, the *Liqoqo*, whose members were mostly drawn from the nobility.

Reform was introduced in 1992, by Mswati III, when he established new electoral arrangements. The *tinkhundla* were formally defined as 'the common delineated areas (constituencies) for both local and national government'. The number of *tinkhundla* was increased to 55, each of which has a representative in the House of Assembly. A further 10 members are appointed by the King.

The election process

There are three stages in the elections for the 55 elected members: nomination, primaries and secondary elections. Nomination of candidates takes place by show of hands in open session at a meeting held at a local school or the chief's *kraal*. The candidates do not officially put themselves forward, but must be proposed by local people. Those nominated then go into a primary election and the winners are put on to the ballot for the constituency (*inkhundla*) representative in the House of Assembly. The second and third stages involve secret voting. Polls are held every five years, the most recent being in October 1998. Turn-out was lower than in 1993, with just 31% of eligible voters casting their ballots. Opposition and trade union groups had called for a boycott and some observers say that this was a significant reason for the poor level of voter participation. Others suggest that apathy and a lack of civic education played a part, as well as disillusionment with incumbent MPs. In fact, the percentage turnout was not very different from that of other African countries that have recently held elections (Zimbabwe 27%, Niger 28%, Botswana 45%, Zambia 34%). And even in the USA, voter participation runs at less than 50%. What is clear from the 1998 result in Swaziland is that there was widespread dissatisfaction with the performance of incumbent MPs – a large number of whom



The Courier

Foreign Minister
Albert Shabangu.
*'It is unfortunate that
our neighbour is
called 'South Africa'
because there is a
tendency to equate it
with Southern Africa.'*

were not re-elected. This would appear to suggest that the process is relatively free from the influence of the chiefs, since it seems unlikely that they would have wanted such a dramatic change.

The advantage of the system, it was suggested to us by one diplomat, is that all the candidates are 'known and trusted'. Indeed, there is a point of view that

the process is actually more democratic than one where parties choose whose names should appear on the ballot. According to *Albert Shabangu*, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade: 'Our approach is community-based and takes democracy to the people. The only thing that does not exist in this system is political parties.' But what about the argument that parties are essential for democracy? The Minister was robust in his response. 'You need a system that enables people to participate in government – a vehicle to take democracy to the people. I am saying that multipartyism is just one possible vehicle. Our system is another. The question of which is superior is open to debate.'

'Tinkhundla is poorly understood, even in Swaziland', another observer told us. 'It is unfortunate that a political ideology has become attached to it. In fact, we could have multipartyism in the tinkhundla framework. It is not a political philosophy, but simply a system of election'.

When it comes to nominating cabinet members, however, it is the King who decides, and he does not necessarily choose ministers from the ranks of elected MPs.

Of the 30 members of the Senate – the upper house of Parliament – 20 are appointed by the King. The current Prime Minister – who is not an elected MP – is also appointed by the monarch, meaning that the latter still has scope to exert substantial influence over government policy.

Swaziland is now the only country in Southern Africa without a multiparty system. We asked Mr Shabangu whether there was pressure for change from other countries in the region. 'Obviously the question does arise', he replied. 'In sub-Saharan Africa, the country that is probably closest to us in terms of its political set-up is Uganda. It is rather uncommon to have elections without political parties. So there is pressure, but not necessarily in the negative sense. People note we are doing something that not many other countries are doing, and wonder if we are right. It could be that we are more democratic. But because industrialised countries have said democracy is not possible without parties,

even some of our own people are suggesting that we should have them.'

Swaziland's reputation as a peaceful place was marred somewhat when a bomb exploded in the Deputy Prime Minister's office just as the new cabinet was being sworn in. A guard was killed and two others were injured. A previously unknown group called 'The Tigers' claimed responsibility. The attack was roundly condemned by opposition groups.

Reviewing the Constitution

Traditionally, when the King wants to hear the people's views on a particular subject, he appoints a commission, called a *vusela*. This carries out consultations and then reports back. Two *vuselas* have asked people what they think about the structure of government and the reply came back that there was a desire for a written constitution. This led to the establishment by the King, in 1996, of the *Constitutional Review Commission* (CRC). He chose its members from a cross-section of society including NGOs, churches and trade unions, with a view to creating a balanced team. The very fact that it was the King who made the nominations, however, became a subject of dispute, with claims being made that it could not be an objective body. The CRC's initial mandate was to draw up a new Constitution within two years (by August 1998). It was subsequently given a two-year extension, and the CRC is now expected to produce a new draft Constitution by 2000. Some see this as a deliberate delaying tactic, while others argue that it was unrealistic to expect this huge task to be completed in such a short period.

The CRC has been affected by splits with some 'progressive' elements opting out, claiming that the body was 'illegitimate'. There has

Reforming industrial relations law

Swaziland's industrial relations legislation has recently come under scrutiny both internally and externally, following criticisms that it is too draconian. The law has attracted the attention of the International Labour Office (ILO) for allegedly contravening ILO conventions which Swaziland has ratified. The United States, meanwhile, has threatened to withdraw Swaziland from its list of countries benefiting from GSP preferences.

In early 1998, a new Industrial Relations Bill was published. The draft, which was drawn up by representatives of employers, workers and government, proposes new dispute resolution procedures and the decriminalisation of certain trade union activities previously deemed to be unlawful. There was a delay, however, because of the *incwala* recess and the bill was not enacted before the dissolution of Parliament last year. Some observers see this as a delaying tactic, while others argue that it provides an opportunity for a more comprehensive political debate. In any case, if the demands of the international community are to be met, the new legislation will need to be passed by the middle of 1999.

also been media criticism of alleged CRC profligacy – relating, for instance, to the money spent on cars for Commission members. The CRC is obliged to adhere to the principles of ‘consultation and participation’, which means listening to the people’s views. In this context, it visits the tinkhundla to hold discussions on the draft Constitution. Another part of its mandate is civic education – teaching people what a constitution involves. Until recently, the consultations had been proceeding in a somewhat desultory way, according to observers we spoke to, but now, with elections out of the way, it is expected that the programme will accelerate.

One thing which is not in short supply in Swaziland is lively debate. As *Hugh Magagula*, Principal Secretary for Information told us: ‘Pick up any newspaper at random and you will find ruthless criticism of government and even of the monarchy. In this country we have never detained anybody for subversive reporting’.

SACU revenues

The economy of Swaziland is closely integrated with South Africa, through the Southern African Customs Union (SACU), and the Common Monetary Area (CMA). SACU, a customs union linking the country with Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia and South Africa, is one of the most important regional organisations for Swaziland. There is a special revenue-sharing formula which provides about 50% of the government’s receipts. The formula is now being renegotiated, in line with WTO requirements, and it is widely expected that income from this source will decline in the medium to long term. We were told by a Finance Ministry official that the deadline for finalising the negotiations was the end of April. He also said that substantial progress had been made in the areas of trade, agriculture and competition. While SACU revenue is almost certain to decline, it is not clear when this will begin to happen. Our interlocutor told us they had ‘negotiated a broad principal that no country should suffer income destabilisation as a result of the new formula.’ The key issue still to be resolved is the base year that should be used in applying the formula. ‘Is it destabilisation from income we received in 1997-98 or the income we will receive in 2001-02.’ This is important because, thanks to rising exports, Swaziland would expect higher revenues in the future under the current arrangements. In any case, the authorities have been told that a new formula should initially have ‘a fairly modest effect’.

Given the expected longer term effects, however, the government is looking at alternative sources of income. One option is to broaden the tax base. ‘There is a new proposal on income tax before the Cabinet’, we were told by *Noreen Maphalala*, Director of Policy Planning in the Finance Ministry. ‘We know we should reduce our dependence on the customs union receipts, but we are a

small agricultural country, with a large percentage of young people. We can’t just keep increasing income tax’. So the emphasis is on widening the base while lowering the basic rate. Changes to indirect taxation are also under consideration. This process includes a review of the costs and benefits of moving to a VAT system.

The government is also trying to attract foreign investment although this is no easy task. As Mr Shabangu wryly observed, ‘people from outside may not even know where Swaziland is. We are a small country almost surrounded by South Africa – which has been so prominent for other reasons. I think it is unfortunate that our neighbour is called ‘South Africa’ because there is a tendency to equate it with Southern Africa. People don’t make any distinction. They have a very strong economy and now that the situation is normalised, it is likely to be the first place people think of as a place to invest. Our other immediate neighbour, Mozambique, is also a big country with great potential. It has good natural resources, as well as harbours and other infrastructure. And the situation there has stabilised too, making it more attractive to overseas investors. In Swaziland, we have to accept this reality and use the businesses already established here in our marketing strategy. When talking to foreign investors, we have started now to speak about those who are already here and operating successfully. They can tell the story of Swaziland’.

Lubombo project

The plain that stretches from the coast to the Lubombo mountains is a place of great natural beauty with a lot of untapped potential. It straddles the territory of Swaziland, South Africa and Mozambique, and the governments of the three countries are involved in the early stages of a trilateral development programme in the region, with a particular focus on tourism and agriculture. Called the *Spatial Development Initiative* (SDI), it was officially launched by the three heads of state in May 1998. The SDI is run by a trilateral ministerial committee. The area covered by the initiative has a unique ecosystem, and a number of existing game parks, meaning that tourism development is likely to feature prominently. We spoke to *Sindi Mabuza* who is the programme’s coordinator in Swaziland. She explained enthusiastically that the region included the St Lucia Wetlands, which are the largest wetlands in the

The area covered by the Lubombo project already has game parks – and tourism has been identified as a promising sector



Breaking the silence on AIDS

Alarming statistics have recently emerged about the extent to which Swaziland has been affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic. According to recent UNAIDS statistics, the country is among the hardest hit in Southern Africa, ranking alongside Botswana, Namibia and Zimbabwe. Swaziland has now been added to the list of countries where 20-26% of the population between the ages of 15 and 49 are carrying the virus. In a 1998 survey, the Health Ministry found that almost 50% of hospital in-patients were HIV-positive. Among tuberculosis patients, the rate is as high as 58% (TB is one of the most common opportunistic infections associated with HIV/AIDS). Another study carried out in mid 1998, of pregnant women, found that 31.6% were seropositive.

The government has now identified HIV/AIDS as an emergency, requiring priority attention. In the words of Foreign Minister Shabangu: 'We are overwhelmed and just don't know what to do. We realise we are heading for disaster. It is not so much a health problem as a social one – it's all about behaviour'. He believes that the time has come to break the silence about AIDS. 'Here it is still taboo for someone to admit they are HIV positive. Even though we are saying this is a national crisis, it remains difficult for someone to come out about their illness.' The Minister cites the example of Uganda, where the disease is now on the wane. 'Uganda was the first country in Africa to admit openly that they had a problem. Now they talk about it at every opportunity. It is important for Swaziland to do the same thing. The preacher should talk about it in church and the teacher in the classroom. Nowadays, almost every family has direct experience of the tragedy'.

Mr Shabangu said the King had taken a lead 'raising the issue of AIDS in most of his speeches – whether he is opening a clinic or talking to a school.' A number of people emphasised to us the importance of the monarch's role. 'He is

held in high esteem. If a message comes from him, it makes a huge difference.'

Dr Steven Shongwa, Deputy Director of Medical Services, regretted that it had taken so long for Swaziland to grasp the AIDS nettle. 'We didn't heed the early warning signs', he told us. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, it was seen as a problem of East Africa – a foreign disease, or at least one that was confined to prostitutes'. The first recorded case in Swaziland was in 1986, he said, and the victim was a foreigner.

A National Aids programme has now been established. This is responsible for coordinating all aspects of the fight against the disease. The government plans to work closely with NGOs, recognising that the scale of the problem obliges all sectors to pull together.

There will be an important emphasis on education and prevention campaigns, designed to increase awareness of the dangers. Schools will be targeted, with a special focus on youth – especially girls, who are often infected at an earlier age than boys. 'This phenomenon has been observed in other African countries as well', Dr Shongwa told us. 'There is a high incidence of sexual abuse and young girls get the virus from older men'.

How can the country afford the huge costs involved in dealing with the epidemic? The government has allocated some funds but one minister admitted to us that these were not enough. This year's budget is expected to include an increase in resources for the fight against AIDS.

On top of the human toll, people are becoming ever more aware of the epidemic's socio-economic impact. Mr Shabangu put the tragedy (both human and economic) in a nutshell when he told us about the primary school where his sister is the principal. 'In the last three years,' he said, 'they have lost five teachers. They were all young people who were recent graduates.'

world. 'At the moment, we are looking at various project possibilities and, so far, those that have been identified are in tourism. We plan to start with projects that have transnational possibilities. The committee has already visited a number of European countries with the aim of selling the idea both to investors and to tour operators', she told us. Once feasibility studies have been completed, the plan is for a number of projects to be opened to international tender.

At the moment, the committee is involved in preparatory work, with a focus on tackling possible 'blockages'. One problem is that the area is malaria endemic, so a trilateral protocol is being drawn up. This will provide for a joint anti-malaria programme, together with joint spraying operations. The question of border controls (physical infrastructures such as customs posts, and visa requirements) is also under examination and a draft protocol is on the drawing board. 'We are toying with the idea of single stop borders to facilitate movement, without compromising security', Ms Mabuza explained. 'This is something of a

pilot scheme', she said, 'and if it is successful among the three countries, it could be taken up at the wider SADC level'. The intention is for the protocols to be signed before tenders are issued, so that investors are reassured.

There is little doubt that Swaziland's future prosperity depends on working closely with its much larger neighbours. At the same time, it needs to strive for its own distinct profile on the Southern African map. The days when this small country represented an island of stability in a sea of turbulence are over. And while it would be churlish to suggest that anyone regrets the improved regional stability, the people of Swaziland recognise that this presents them with new and difficult challenges. ■

D.M.

Prime Minister Dr B. Sibusiso Dlamini

'The changes are evolutionary rather than revolutionary'

A general election was held in Swaziland in October 1998, and following the poll, King Mswati reappointed Prime Minister, Dr Sibusiso Dlamini, for a second term. A former Finance Minister, Dr Dlamini has also served as an executive director of the IMF. Among the subjects raised in his discussion with the Courier, Dr Dlamini speaks of the consequences for his country of living in proximity to its giant neighbour South Africa, with which it has close monetary and trade links. He also refers to the unique form of government in Swaziland – one of the few ruling monarchies remaining in Africa – and its mixture of tradition and modernity. We began by asking him to outline the main economic challenges facing Swaziland, and the priorities of the new government.



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realise that government alone cannot generate employment. But it should provide an enabling, investor-friendly environment, so that the private sector can provide the necessary jobs. The government is committed to improving the business environment, to making our tax regime attractive, and to improving infrastructure. Swaziland is perceived as a country of peace and harmony, and we are working hard to maintain this in the field of industrial relations. The new Industrial Relations Bill will assist in this.

The decrease in receipts from the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) is also a source of concern. At present, this is responsible for about half of the government's revenue, but it is clearly going to decline. What plans do you have for finding other revenue sources?

We are laying stress on revenue diversification. As you rightly point out, more than 50% of our revenue is from SACU. With EU assistance, we are looking at improving collection of existing revenue. The government has also adopted an adjustment programme called the National Development Strategy (NDS). This is a 25-year programme and it was formulated by a cross-section of Swazi society stakeholders; the private sector, employers, workers, NGOs, religious and traditional leaders, and youth representatives. It is a good attempt to consult with Swazi society on what government should do. It is a consensus document, intended for use by whichever government is in power as a basis for any short-term programmes.

Other than SACU, what other regional organisations are important for Swaziland?

We are founding members of both SADC and COMESA, two of the principal regional organisations. There is an overlap between these two in some sectors, for example trade and

What measures are being taken to increase employment possibilities?

We are focusing on private sector development, and the EU is assisting us here. We



The government is committed to improving the business environment

transport. We decided that, as a small country we needed bigger markets to service our private sector and as such, we support initiatives to eliminate barriers to regional trade. Swaziland is a signatory to the SADC Trade Protocol, the objective of which is to achieve a Free Trade Area within an eight-year period. As we speak, the Comesa Council of Ministers is meeting and our trade minister is taking part. We see regional cooperation as a pillar for our development efforts.

What are the consequences of your closeness to South Africa, especially in terms of the Common Monetary Area?

Our economy is closely linked with South Africa through SACU and the Common Monetary Area (CMA). About half our exports go to South Africa and 80% of our imports come from there. So there is this strong economic

tie. South Africa is a huge neighbouring country but we have lived with that for a long time, even when there was a hostile government. There are upsides and downsides, but on balance, the relationship is positive.

Are you concerned about the impact of possible South Africa-EU free trade arrangements?

We are following these negotiations very closely, and I have had discussions with Commissioner Pinheiro in Brussels. We are pleased that the EU is discussing this with us, and we do not expect a unilateral arrangement to be made between the EU and South Africa without our concerns being taken into account.

On the subject of ACP-EU cooperation, what would you like to see in a future Convention?

We are happy with Lomé IV as it is, and hope that a future Convention will have similar features. The commodity protocols – for things like sugar, bananas, beef and rum – have contributed to social and economic development in the various ACP countries. I believe they should be retained, though some need to be reviewed. We are aware of the practicalities, and as a founding member of the WTO, we are aware of our obligations. But the case of the ACP countries is peculiar. Solidarity has had a positive effect on our development efforts. I think consideration could be given to continuing non-reciprocal preferences for the least-developed countries, and the more vulnerable landlocked states. We would like to see a post-Lomé arrangement which is similar to the existing one.

The WTO is now questioning the Lomé preferential system. What would be the consequences for Swaziland if this system were to change?

Our economy is export-based and sugar accounts for close to 20% of our GDP. Any removal of preferences will affect us, especially now that so many Swazi smallholders are producing sugar. It would really affect these small farmers who have just discovered the advantages of the preferential arrangements. In the past, we had problems with the chiefs in the rural areas over land use and control. As you know, we have two different land ownership arrangements here, Title Deed Lands and Swazi Nation Lands, the latter being controlled by His Majesty. His Majesty has agreed to give long leases to the small farmers at no cost. This means that they



Tradition is an important element in Swazi life. 'More than 95% of the people can trace their roots back 400 years'

don't have the expense of buying the land and, at the same time, there are no lease charges, so it is actually free land. This is a new arrangement and the smallholders are taking advantage of that. We are concerned about the effect on the small farmer if the preferences are removed.

Can I ask about the Swazi system of government? Given that the global tendency is towards multiparty democracy, what are the advantages of the traditional system for Swaziland?

There are many advantages. I think it is fair to say that multipartyism does not automatically lead to the improved well-being of the people, and in many countries it has led to serious disorder. We are a small nation with a population of less than one million. More than 95% of the people can trace their roots back 400 years. Our kings have reigned since the 16th century, the time of the Tudors in England. We all speak the same language, and share the same culture and beliefs. Our system has always been based on consultation, and for many years, after a great deal of discussion, the Swazi people have said 'multipartyism is not for us'. King Sobhuza, the current monarch's father, consulted the people as the present King has done. The latest development is the Constitutional Review Commission (CRC). This was appointed in 1996 to consider the political reforms that the Swazi people want, and to draw up a constitution based on their wishes. We cannot yet say what its findings will be: whether it will recommend multiparty, one party, or no party. But in the past, the conclusion was that multipartyism was not for us. Our system has worked well. It is based on the *Tinkhundla*, which literally means constituency development centres. We believe that this is grass-roots democracy, where rural communities

have a say. In the last election, the people were able to express their wishes and the turnover in Parliament was remarkably high – only seven members were re-elected, and half of the present cabinet is new. So people are able to change things. The changes are evolutionary rather than revolutionary, in the sense that the system allows for new blood to come in all the time. There has been criticism, which we are trying to address, that His Majesty is an absolute monarch. That is not the case. Somebody who doesn't know the system might think that this is the situation, but the King does not take unilateral decisions. He consults the cabinet and other statutory and informal advisors. So whenever he makes a decision, he takes account of what his advisors are saying. I have worked with him for more than 10 years now as Minister of Finance and as Prime Minister, and I have always seen him consulting before making any decision. Of course there are also decisions that are outside his remit, which are taken by government. We consult him, as any government would consult the Head of State. Laws are passed by Parliament, and he has to assent like any other head of state, but it is rare that he refers any legislation back to the legislature. In my 10 years in Parliament, only three pieces of legislation have been referred back. So the criticism that he is an absolute monarch is really not a fair one.

Would you say that there is room, within this system, for the so-called 'progressives' to have their voice heard?

They do make their voice heard. Last week two of them held conventions where they elected new executives. It is not as if they are prevented from holding public gatherings, though the legislation on this is a somewhat grey area. They meet and issue statements. They are interviewed in the press, radio and TV. The problem is that they don't have the support. When they call public meetings, they are lucky if 30 people turn up. So what they do now is call meetings in bus stations where there are always lots of people.

The CRC, for which the EU is providing assistance, will come up with a constitution. The King established this Commission with a broad-based membership which included the president of one of the progressive groups. But the progressives – and I use that word loosely as the government also claims to be progressive – walked out. We hope the CRC will assist us. It has had teething problems but the King has taken it upon himself to move the whole process forward. We want it to come up with a consensus document but, of course, consensus doesn't mean unanimity. There will still be reservations, but as long as the majority is happy, that is what we are aiming for. ■

Interview by D.M.

An agricultural economy in transition

by Stephen Atkins*

Swaziland is seen as having a successful economy underpinned by dynamic commercial agriculture. This view is reflected in the UNDP's 1998 Human Development Report which places this southern African country firmly in the group of middle-ranking developing nations. However, the study also reveals a low level of human development – suggesting a disproportionately low investment in the social infrastructures that are essential for promoting equitable and sustainable human development.

This article examines the paradoxes of the agrarian economy and the route government is taking to improve opportunities for households in the traditional rural sub-sector.

The lie of the land

Swaziland is situated on the escarpment that forms the eastern boundary of the Transvaal plateau in South Africa. The distinct drop in altitude from over 1500m in the west to less than 100m in the east means that the country has a varied physical environment and a number of distinct agro-ecological zones.

The highveld and upper middleveld in western Swaziland are humid or sub-humid zones. The rivers and most streams are perennial. The highveld's moderately cool thermal regime, and its annual rainfall of between 850mm and 1400mm, make it suitable for rainfed cultivation of a range of crops, including maize, sunflowers, beans, tobacco, vegetables, peaches, apples and plums. Farming potential is severely limited, however, by the steep slopes, and the often shallow and highly leached, infertile soils. The upper middleveld is distinctly warmer with a rainfall figure of between 800mm and 1000mm *per annum*. This makes it suitable for growing the above-mentioned field crops as well as groundnuts, sweet potatoes, irrigated subtropical fruits, sugar cane, and vegetables. In this area, soil acidity is a constraining factor.

The lowveld and adjacent lower middleveld in the eastern half of the country are semi-arid zones. In most years, annual rainfall ranges between 450mm and 700mm. Only the major rivers, and some streams in the lower middleveld, are perennial. The relatively low precipitation, and its erratic seasonal distribution, limit rainfed production in these zones to drought-resistant crops such as cotton, sorghum, sweet potatoes and groundnuts. However, the climatic conditions and the relatively flat topography allow irrigated

production of a wide range of crops including sugar cane, citrus, cotton, maize, and vegetables in winter.

The isolated plateau remnants of the Lebombo range, situated along the eastern border of Swaziland, have agro-ecological conditions similar to the upper middleveld, but with very few perennial water sources.

Just over half the country's agricultural land is *Swazi Nation Land* vested in the *Ngwenyama* (King) in trust for the nation. Since independence in 1968, almost a quarter of the country's total territory has been repurchased from freehold land and returned to Swazi Nation Land status. The remaining areas are Title Deed Land held under individual tenure, and Crown Land over which Government holds title.

Structure of the agricultural economy

The Swazi economy is strongly outward-oriented. In 1995, about 79% of GDP was generated by exports, with the farm sector responsible for more than 32%. However, even these figures understate the real value of agriculture to the economy. Manufacturing contributes about 34% of GDP, but in recent years, more than three-quarters of industrial output has involved adding value to farm products.

The agricultural economy is strongly characterised by dualism. According to official statistics, commercial arable estates generate more than 81% of all agricultural output (and 8.6% of GDP). By contrast, traditional farming accounts for some 11% of agricultural output and for less than 1.2% of GDP.

Typical homestead in the middleveld



* EU-funded Technical Adviser to the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives in Mbabane. The views expressed in this article are not necessarily those of the EU or the Swazi Government.

It is not surprising to discover that most agricultural earnings come from sales of sugar and citrus, and their associated products. These are the crops grown mainly by commercial estates either on Title Deed Land, or in some cases, on repurchased Swazi Nation Land. Most are owned and controlled by multinational corporations operating in tandem with the national investment house *Tibiyo Taka Ngwane*.

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A smallholder's cotton field

land has also experienced a lot of labour unrest in its formal sector in recent years as the country, in its turn, comes to grips with issues of multiparty

democracy.

As off-farm income-earning opportunities shrink, the country's political harmony and economic progress depend increasingly on the ability of small-scale agriculture (located on Swazi Nation Land) to support the rapidly growing population. Preliminary results of the 1997 census indicate that the population is increasing at 2.7% *per annum*. On this basis, the number of people in the country will double to 1.8 million over the next 25 years.

If these expected demographic pressures are accompanied by economic stagnation, the effect will be to accentuate already worrying poverty levels. 48% of the population is defined as falling below the food poverty line, although there are significant variations between rural and urban areas, and between administrative regions. The first ever *Swaziland Human Development Report*, published in 1998, states that 30% of urban dwellers are regarded as 'poor', while 55% of rural people fall into this category. There are areas, such as the semi-arid lowveld, where the figure is put as high as 85%. Economic shocks and natural calamities will have a profound impact on the livelihoods of these people.

What this means is that there is a need to intensify the traditional farming sub-sector – to improve food security, increase income-earning potential from off-farm sales, reduce poverty and boost employment. However, the structure of the rural economy and the support given to traditional agriculture will not make this an easy task.

Today, however, a change is under way. For some time, *Tibiyo Taka Ngwane* has been increasing its shareholdings in foreign-owned estates through a series of dividend for equity swaps. This has some drawbacks for the country in terms of current and long term liquidity, especially bearing in mind the ambitious capital development programme which aims to facilitate smallholder irrigation and the development of the wider rural economy. Capital outflows and the extent of foreign ownership may account for the apparent disparity between the country's estimated GDP and its low ranking on the UNDP's human development index. The latter tends to reflect the degree to which earnings are reinvested in social services and capital structures to promote human development.

Rural jobs, population growth and poverty

Commercial estates employ about 20,000 people. The rest of the rural population (650,000 people) depends, to a greater or lesser extent, on the traditional subsistence sector. Reporting on recent economic trends in Swaziland, the World Bank estimated that agriculture accounted for about 60% of the average rural household's income – divided equally between crops and livestock. However, more than 80% of rural households also received some form of non-farm remittance.

This ability to rely partly on off-farm income is currently under threat. Investment funds that might have come to Swaziland are now flowing into South Africa instead. Meanwhile, the latter's new labour laws are designed to encourage migrant workers to return home. In 1996, 14,725 Swazis were employed in South Africa's mines. Three years earlier, the figure was about 20,000. Swazi-

Traditional farming systems

Understanding the role of farming in the traditional household economy is central to designing efforts to improve food security and modernise the sub-sector. About half the smallholder cropped area is devoted to just a few commodities such as subsistence maize, cotton and groundnuts. Maize alone accounts for almost 50% of the cropland. Dryland yields are reportedly low (maize 1600 kgs per hectare, cotton 310 kgs, groundnuts 750 kgs), reflecting the riskiness of dryland agriculture. Lowveld maize has only a 35% chance of reaching medium range yields in a given season, while cotton production leaves the grower without an economic yield one year in five.

Almost 60% of smallholder households own cattle. These are allowed to graze in excess on common pasture at no cost, while government dipping services and most other veterinary facilities are provided free. Cattle fulfil many roles. They serve as a form of currency

and a hedge against inflation. They provide dairy products and manure, and are employed as beasts of burden. And they have an intrinsic traditional value for their owners. However, a consequence of open access grazing on Swazi Nation Land is that the pastures are not maintained, far less improved. As a result, fertility rates are low, calf mortality is high, and the animals are generally in poor condition. The Agriculture Ministry is predicting that these grazing systems will – sooner rather than later – lead to severe soil erosion, undermining the sustainability of traditional farming.

Reading through the literature on the smallholder economy in Swaziland, it is clear that these findings are not new. Indeed, the problem has been analysed and debated for many years. So why has so little been done to improve the performance of the smallholder sector? Why has the need for wealth-creating opportunities not been built into smallholder sector policies and strategies. The base of the rural economy needs to be broadened, enabling smallholders to enjoy the positive multiplier effects that have been observed in comparable African economies.

The World Bank has noted the dynamism and potential for traditional agriculture in Swaziland. There is clear evidence of this among the small-scale sugar producers, who, given the opportunity, have been willing to seize the initiative and make a success of commercial agriculture. There is reasonable evidence to support the view that, with the right technological and policy environment, the productivity of subsistence farming could be boosted significantly. Where problems of market access, capital, information and managerial expertise have successfully been tackled, smallholders have performed extremely well. But for this issue of transaction costs to be tackled comprehensively, there needs to be a radical change in the structure of the smallholder sector, and an equally radical rethink of the roles of government, the private sector and the supporting institutions.



Cattle have an intrinsic traditional value for their owners

The way forward

The authorities are currently addressing the problem of underachievement in traditional agriculture. They are actively supporting developments that offer smallholders a chance to participate in commercial agriculture, especially in partnership with the private sector, with help from NGOs. The government emphasises the principle of social equity but it also recognises that support

given to smallholders must be effective and that there needs to be accountability.

As we move towards the new millenium, the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives is commissioning a study to review support to smallholder agriculture. The critical questions that will be asked are:

- What services should be mobilised to enhance the performance of agriculture on Swazi Nation Land?
- What is the scope for public sector involvement in the sector?
- What is the scope for private sector and NGO involvement?
- What scope exists for multi-agency involvement?
- What resources are required to implement the various options?
- What does change mean for the existing structure and activity of government?
- What is a feasible action plan for the reorganisation process?
- How can the process of change be implemented?

Experience from many countries indicates that pure economic arguments justifying reduced public support, offer relatively poor guidance as to how far and in what way governments should be involved. Reform is a complex issue, even when only the intra-governmental aspects are considered. The introduction of a multi-agency approach complicates the picture further, and each focus of reform must be reviewed on its own merits.

As regards social equity, the analysis will look at how fiscal and financial incentives have been used to stimulate and promote agricultural development. There are also cross-cutting issues that must be considered. These include education policy, the support given to other sectors such as manufacturing, the deployment of development assistance, and the amount of income derived from commodity sales into preferential markets.

Previously, inertia prevented adaptations from taking place. This was partly due to the fact that jobs continued to be created in a growing economy. The current situation, however, is likely to change considerably in coming years. There may well be a new impetus for reforms from returning migrant workers and the urban unemployed – who will find it increasingly difficult to obtain work outside their rural homesteads, but whose value systems are fixed in the economic sectors they left behind. There is little doubt that their energy needs to be channelled productively for the good of the nation. ■ S.A.

Sugar – the sweet taste of success

The sugar industry is crucial to the Swazi economy. It is the biggest source of foreign exchange, bringing in E580 million in the 1997-98 season, and the largest employer. In the agricultural sector, sugar cane growing represents roughly 53% of farm output, and provides about 34% of wage employment. There are equally impressive figures in the industrial sector, with cane milling representing 37% of manufacturing output, and roughly 22% of wage employment.

Local consumption of sugar surged to 337,080 tonnes in 1997-98, an increase of 15% on the previous year. Notionally, Swaziland has the highest *per capita* sugar consumption in the world, at 169 kg per head, compared to an average of 20 kg. The figure is so high because it includes sugar 'consumed' by local manufacturers in the production of soft drinks, fruit juices (including concentrates) and canned fruit. A number of companies operate in this area. *Swazican* is a fruit processor and jam maker, exporting worldwide. Its grapefruit segments supply about 25% of the UK market. *Cadburys* uses local sugar to make confectionery. *Swazico* produces blends to use in biscuits and fruit juices, and there is a *Coca-Cola* concentrate plant, which supplies 15 other African countries. Such enterprises have located in Swaziland to take advantage of the plentiful supply of sugar at a cheaper price than is found elsewhere in the region. In addition, the country's sugar is famed for its high quality. 'Swaziland produces one of the best sugars, especially for refineries', according to *Dr Xaba*, of the Swaziland Sugar Association (SSA).

'Smart partnership'

The sugar industry was once perceived by Swazis as 'foreign-owned', – with local people simply providing the labour while the profits went elsewhere. That may have been true in the past, but *Dr Xaba* told us that the picture is now changing. 'Swazis used to regard the industry with suspicion but that is less true nowadays as local participation steadily increases. 47% of cane-growing is now local, and the figure for milling is 51%. There is keen interest in boosting local participation still further in what *Dr Xaba* calls a 'smart partnership'. It is hoped, in this way, that not only the big companies will benefit from an expanding industry, but that there will also be a 'trickle down' effect. *Dr Shabangu*, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade, explained the 'smart partnership' concept to us. 'It means making best use of local skills and local entrepreneurs. If someone comes in with millions to invest, say in sugar – because

that's our 'gold' – they should try to source this from local smallholders so that they become part of the investment. They must develop a partnership with the local people. The subsistence farmer needs to be encouraged to grow sugar to sell to the millers'.

An encouraging development is the spread of cane-growing to Swazi Nation Land (SNL). The challenge facing the sugar industry at this time is how to accommodate and cater for large numbers of smallholders who wish to grow sugar. This will no doubt require a radical change in mindset for the industry and is perhaps the greatest challenge facing the SSA at this time. SNL is traditionally allocated by the chiefs, on communal tenure, and has been exploited for subsistence rather than commercial farming. 'The chiefs hesitated at first', said *Dr Xaba*, 'but then the King came out and gave the go ahead'. Now, farmers who would have grown maize or vegetables are turning to cane growing where water is available.

Cane in Swaziland is cultivated on irrigated land, and can thus be produced during drought periods. But for production to increase further, there needs to be extra water storage capacity. 'We desperately need dams', *Dr Xaba* emphasised. 'During the rainy season, flood water is lost because we don't have enough capacity'. This viewpoint was confirmed by *Dr Shabangu*. 'Our weakest point in the past has been the management of water. If you fly over South Africa on a clear day, you will see a dam almost every few kilometres. They have harnessed their water much better than we have done'. He continued: 'The problem in Swaziland is not lack of water, but the huge capital expense involved in managing it.' There are various plans in the pipeline aimed at improving the

Swazican products are exported worldwide





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situation, including a smallholder irrigation scheme in the Usuthu River Basin (assisted by the EU and other donors), and a dam project on the Komati river.

Sugar refinery.
Local ownership in the sector has increased

Quota dependence?

Swaziland benefits from preferential terms under the EC Sugar Protocol. Under this arrangement, Swaziland has contracted to export 120,000 metric tonnes of raw sugar to EU markets at a guaranteed price. This price is currently almost three times that of the world market. There is also a special short-term arrangement called the Sugar Preferential Scheme (SPS) whereby Swaziland exports an additional quantity of about 50,000 tonnes to the EU. This was put in place to take account of the additional needs of EU Member States, in particular Finland. The arrangement is due to end in 2001, but Dr Xaba is hoping that it will be extended. The EC Sugar Protocol has a separate legal status to the Lomé Convention, and officially does not end with the expiry of the current Convention in the year 2000. 'There is no time limit for the Protocol', explained Dr Xaba, 'but the WTO is of the opinion that such protocols create distortions in the world market'. Because of the WTO attitude, it is feared that the EU will phase out such preferential trade arrangements. Dr Xaba believes that this would have serious consequences in Swaziland, especially for the smallholders who are just now getting involved in the industry. 'If all our sugar had to be sold on the world market, then smallholders would go under', he believes. 'The

only positive thing would be that the infrastructure – notably the irrigation systems – would be in place so that shifting to another crop would be relatively straightforward.' The downside is that other crops, such as maize, would not pay as well as sugar.

In addition to its EU quota, Swaziland exports to the USA on preferential terms. The amount of sugar exported under this arrangement depends on demand, and was 27,000 tonnes in 1997-98.

About 55% of Swaziland's sugar sales go to its two preferential quota markets (EU and USA). The remaining 45% went to the SACU market. Industrial demand within Swaziland is increasing, Dr Xaba told us, and the SSA has been encouraging this trend, by attracting foreign sugar-consuming companies to the country. The package offered to potential investors includes rebates to companies for local added value, and the strategy has clearly been successful. 'We haven't sold any sugar on the world market for the last two years', said Dr Xaba, 'because all our production has been absorbed.'

In March 1998, Swaziland and South Africa signed a market-sharing agreement regulating sugar trading between the two countries. This brings to an end a long dispute over exports of Swazi sugar to its larger neighbour.

D.M.

Obed Dlamini, President of the *Ngwane National Liberatory Congress* (NNLC)

'There is nothing to prevent us having a multiparty system while maintaining our monarchy'

Political parties have been officially banned in Swaziland since 1972, when *King Sobhuza II* also suspended the Constitution. Despite the prohibition, an intriguing situation prevails in the country today. A number of opposition groups appear to operate openly, holding meetings, and receiving regular media coverage. One of these is the *Ngwane National Liberatory Congress* (NNLC), which, during our visit, held internal elections and chose a new president. He is *Obed Dlamini*, a former Prime Minister of Swaziland. Indeed, it was in this capacity that he was interviewed by *The Courier* in 1989. He has also had long experience in the country's trade union movement.

Multipartyism flowers...

Political groupings began to emerge during the 1960s, contesting the pre-independence elections of 1964 and 1967. The King himself, *Sobhuza II*, was persuaded to form a political party called the *Imbokodvo National Movement* (INM), which went on to win all the seats in both 1964 and 1967. These overwhelming victories put paid to most other fledgling parties. The exception was the *Ngwane National Liberatory Congress* (NNLC), which was more radical. Its adherents came from both the middle and working classes but while it attracted some support, it remained without a seat in parliament until the first post-independence election of 1972. This was effectively the first campaign in which the royalist party faced a serious challenge, and the

NNLC emerged with three seats out of a total of 23.

...then withers

The NNLC was not destined to evolve into a traditional opposition, however. Shortly after the vote, the King declared a State of Emergency, and banned all political parties – including his own! He ruled by decree until 1978. The feeling in official circles was that a Westminster-style parliament, with its robust opposition, was not in tune with the traditions of Swaziland and could prove divisive in this small and close-knit society. As the Permanent Secretary for Public Service and Information, *Hugh Magagula*, explained to us: 'The

decision to outlaw party politics had its roots in the fact that, after the first post-independence elections, we had some parliamentary opposition. For the first time we had this boisterous, heckling Parliament. We have seen that kind of thing in South Africa, in the UK and in other places as well. But it was a new phenomenon for us. We are a quiet, compliant and respectful society, so it probably affected us negatively to hear people heckling speakers and so on. His Majesty felt obliged to tackle the question – was this inherited system of confrontational party politics really what we wanted?'

A quiet, compliant and respectful society?



The Courier

Mr Dlamini remembers things differently. Speaking to us by telephone (not for any reasons of clandestinity but simply because of logistics) he told us that, at that time, his party was one of the two strong political forces in the country. When the three victorious NNLC members went to take their seats in Parliament after the 1972 election, they were, he said, greatly resented by the majority party, who feared they would become a serious opposition. 'They refused to accept our elected representatives in Parliament', he insisted, seeing them as a direct challenge to their authority. 'They cooked up a lie that it was impossible to work in the western way', he told us. The exact date on which political parties were outlawed – 12 April 1973 – is engraved in his memory. At the same time, 'the King dissolved Parliament, assumed all authority himself, and formed the first army the country had ever had'.

A legal grey area

Mr Dlamini told us that, despite the legal ban, his party had just been given a new lease of life following a weekend congress where a new executive was put in place. The NNLC's new deputy president is *Barnabas Mhlongo*, a former Commerce and Industry Minister. According to our interviewee, the party now has more than 10,000 paid-up members, its support coming mostly from urban areas. But how, we wondered, was it possible for the NNLC to operate when domestic law expressly prohibits political groupings? 'The party will continue in existence', Mr Dlamini responded, 'unless and until we decide to dissolve it. We are protected by international law'. Political parties have *de facto* freedom up to a point, he says. 'The government can do little about them, as Swaziland is a member of the United Nations and is a signatory to the Universal Declaration on Human Rights.'

We asked our interviewee why the NNLC had withdrawn from the Constitutional Review Commission (CRC) set up by the King in 1996 with the purpose of drawing up a new constitution? Wasn't this a golden opportunity to make an input into future arrangements for the governance of the country? Mr Dlamini's response was that his party had disagreed with certain nominations to the Commission. The quality of some of those concerned was 'questionable', he said, and, in any case, they were not 'properly elected'. He claimed that progressives were 'harrassed' by other Commission members, and there were serious doubts about the quality of the work being done by this body. In these circumstances, the progressives had decided to resign from the CRC. 'The Head of State should swallow his pride and allow the people to constitute a new CRC', he said. 'If it is a democratic process then we will support it'.

Plea for modernisation

Mr Dlamini also believes that the *tinkhundla* system needs to be reformed. 'It is not appropriate at this stage in our history. It has no philosophical basis and offers no vision or manifesto for the country. Indeed, there is nothing written down'. The NNLC's leader believes that the time has come to abandon the system in favour of multipartyism. Citing the examples of the United Kingdom and Denmark he observed: 'There is nothing to prevent us having a multi-party system while maintaining our monarchy'.

Referring to a recent terrorist bomb attack in Swaziland, Mr Dlamini was keen to stress that his party condemned all forms of violence, 'whether it comes from the ruling party or the opposition'. Their position was that 'violence begets violence'. On the other hand, he believes it is a mistake to attempt to silence dissenting



Terrorist bomb damage in Mbabane.
The NNLC 'condemns all forms of violence'

voices. 'Regimes that seek to suppress dissent, sow the seeds of their own destruction', he believes. He went on to argue that the government should investigate the terrorist incidents with 'accuracy and firmness... but without panicking'.

In the past, our interviewee told us, Swaziland was a quiet and uncorrupt country, but now he maintains, 'corruption seems to be creeping in'. The chiefdoms, he stated, are poorly adapted to modern needs and 'are an obstacle to economic development'. His main aim, he said, was to demonstrate to the Swazi people that his party was capable of providing sound leadership, and to prove 'that a multi-party system can work'. ■ D.M.

A unique blend of the old and the new

One of the three remaining kingdoms in Africa (Lesotho and Morocco are the others) Swaziland is the one that is closest to a traditional African monarchy. The royal family is an integral part of Swazi life, from politics to tradition and customs, and the country's very identity is inextricably bound up with it. The current King is *Mswati III*, who celebrated his 30th birthday in September 1998. Ascending the throne in 1986, at the age of 18, he was – and still is – one of the youngest reigning monarchs in the world. The general impression one gets is that he is regarded with affection and pride by his people. Many people speak of his personal charm, modern outlook and a willingness to listen. Even opponents of the political system in Swaziland – where political parties are officially prohibited – talk of maintaining the monarchy in a multiparty system.

Mswati's father, *Sobhuza II*, had the distinction of being the world's longest serving monarch at the time of his death in 1982, having reigned for 61 years. Five years after independence, in 1973, he revoked the Constitution, saying it was a legacy of colonial rule which did not reflect the true nature of the country. He also banned political parties, claiming they were alien and divisive. In their place, he reinstated a traditional Swazi concept of government – the *tinkhundla* system – whereby candidates for election are selected in their local areas, and have no political affiliation.

The royal succession is not by primogeniture. Swazi monarchs still practise polygamy and there is no guarantee that the first-born son of the first wife will ascend the throne. Generally, the successor is young, and an 'only son', thus avoiding fraternal conflict and the scenario where an elderly successor is

waiting impatiently in the wings, representing a possible challenge to the king's authority. Where there is no obvious heir, a list of suitable candidates is drawn up and the princes' council decides who should ascend the throne.

There is a kind of dual monarchy in Swaziland, with the King (*ngwenyama*, 'the lion') ruling in conjunction with the Queen Mother (*ndlovukazi*, 'the she-elephant'), who, in the case of the current monarch, is his natural mother. It is not clear to what extent the monarch is influenced by his parent and this was a subject which cropped up frequently in discussion during our visit. Nowadays, they do not exercise absolute power, as the king is advised by a traditional body, the Swaziland National Council. There is also, of course, a modern parliament composed largely of elected members. Thus there is a dualism in the political system – modern and traditional institutions operating side-by-side.

Another example of dualism is to be found in the marriage laws. There are two forms of marriage, one based on tradition and the other founded in the civil law. Payment of a bride price, or *lobola*, (involving the donation of cattle by the groom to the bride's family), still exists but this is becoming less common. The monarchy is the focus of colourful ceremonies marking special occasions, such as the *incwala*, and the *umhlanga* (reed dance).

Incwala

The most important event in the Swazi calendar, the *incwala*, is an annual moveable feast which takes place during the rainy season in December or January. It has sacred significance and at this time, the monarch is expected to enter a period of seclusion and reflection. It is also a time when political life more or less grinds to a halt. *Incwala* is, in addition, a kind of harvest festival, celebrating the first fruits of the season. It begins with an expedition across Mozambique by carefully selected 'regiments' of men to collect holy water from the sea. It is prescribed that the water must be drawn when there is a full moon. The identity of those chosen to make the trip, and the route they take is a carefully kept secret. Herbs are collected en route, and mixed with the seawater. The king apparently uses this sacred mixture to wash away bad luck, and cleanse himself in preparation for the new year. Through this ceremony, the monarch's

Traditional Swazi dress



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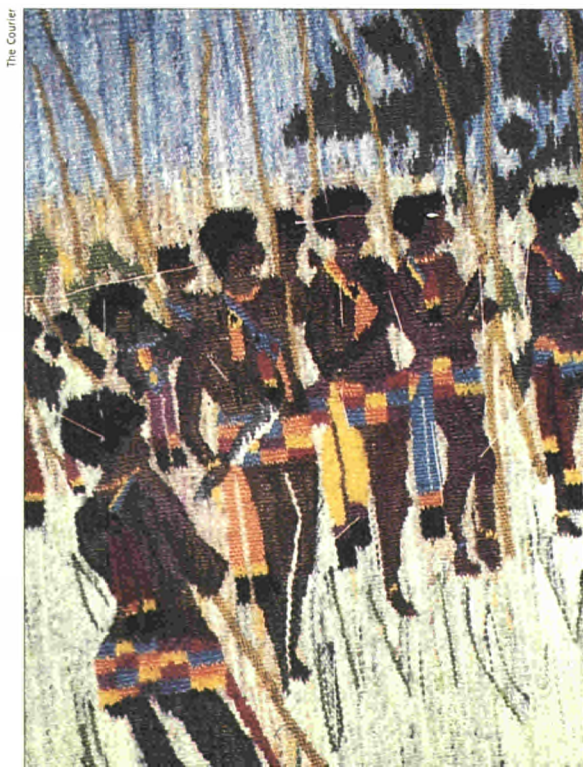
strength is supposed to be renewed, and the peace and prosperity of the people assured.

Umhlanga (Reed Dance)

Although also an important annual ceremony, the *umhlanga* does not have the same sacred significance as the *incwala*. It is held during July or August, in honour of the Queen Mother. Unmarried girls from throughout the country gather to collect reeds, to repair the windbreaks around the Queen Mother's house. This is followed by the reed dance, which takes place in the Royal Kraal. The girls wear short beaded skirts, and are adorned with jewellery. It can also be viewed as a kind of initiation into womanhood, and it is said that the King uses the occasion to select a new bride!

Sibhaca is an exuberant dance, in which young men dressed in traditional costume

Tapestry showing the reed dance



The Courier

Local architecture displayed in the Swazi Cultural Village

perform energetic high-kicking movements, to the accompaniment of drum beats. Performances of the dance can be seen at the newly-opened Cultural Village, funded from the EDF. A replica of a traditional Swazi homestead for a typical polygamous household (with two wives) has been built here, showing the architecture and lifestyle of the 1850s. The homestead has beehive huts, reed windbreaks and a *kraal* (cattle byre), all built from materials used at that time. Thus, for example, the floor is made from earth taken from termite mounds, polished with cow dung. Also on view are crafts such as weaving and basketry, and traditional hairstyling.

Government representatives we spoke to were at pains to point out that, while Swazi culture is cherished, 'foreign' influences are not rejected. *Hugh Magagula*, Permanent Secretary for the Public Service and Information, told us: 'As a nation we have our history, our cultural practices and our own thought processes. We cannot ignore our past, and we use it as a base on which to build. That is the mission of the nation. But we certainly do not shun something simply because it is foreign. We look at whether it is good for us'.

D.M.

Profile

General information

Area: 17,364 km²

Population: 912,876 (1997)

Population density: 53 per km²

Capital: Mbabane

Other main population centres: Manzini 220,000, Hhohho 201,000

Languages: English and siSwati are the official languages.

Religion: predominantly Christian

Political structure

System: Monarchy (dual monarchy as the King rules in conjunction with the Queen Mother). The Queen Mother acts principally as the guardian of tradition and culture, while the King is concerned with matters of state.

Monarch: King Mswati III (since 1986, when he ascended the throne aged 18).

Parliament: There is a bicameral National Parliament, consisting of the Senate which has 30 senators (20 appointed by the king and 10 elected by the House of Assembly); and a House of Assembly of 65 members (10 appointed by the king, 55 elected). Elections are held under the *Tinkhundla* electoral system. The most re-

cent legislative elections were in October 1998



Prime Minister: (appointed by the king) Dr B. Sibusiso Dlamini

Economy

Currency: Lilangeni, plural Emalangeni (pegged to the South African rand).
€1 = approx. 6,57 SZL (December 1998)

GDP per capita: \$1320

GDP growth: 3.5% (1997 est.)

Inflation rate: 7.3% (1997 est.)

Total external debt: US\$232m

Main economic sectors: agriculture, agro-industry (largely based on sugar, citrus, wood-pulp, maize, cotton), manufacturing, mining (asbestos, coal, diamonds), tourism.

Main trade partner: South Africa (about 50% of exports and 80% of imports), EU, Mozambique, USA, Japan

Trade balance: Surplus of SZL 66.1 million (1997)

Social indicators

Life expectancy at birth: 59 years

Adult literacy: 76.7% (1995)

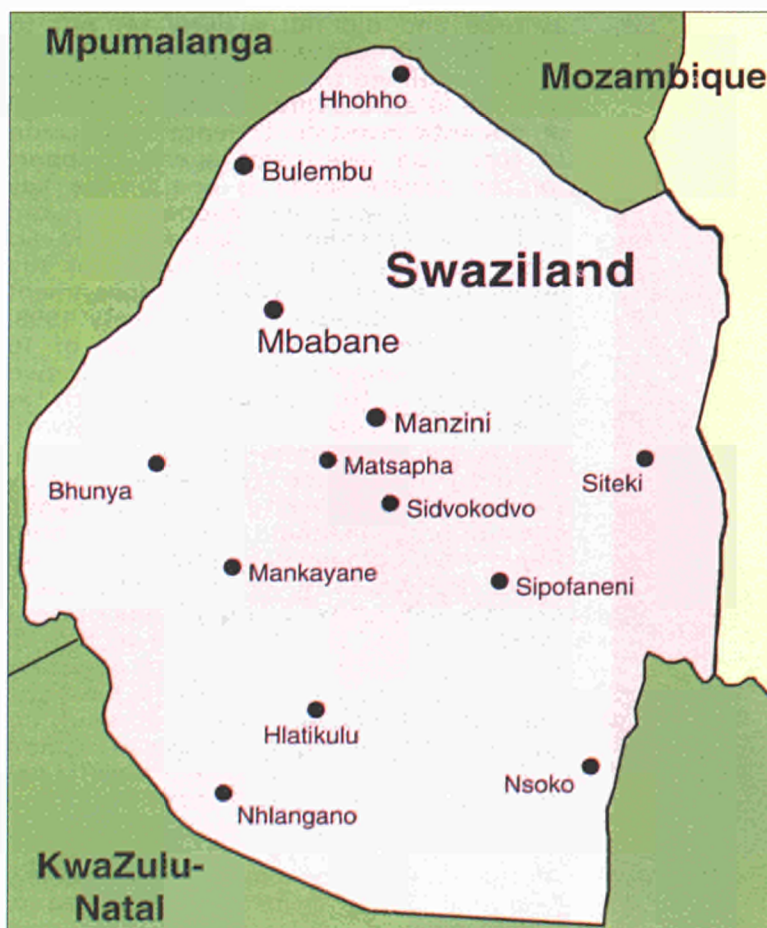
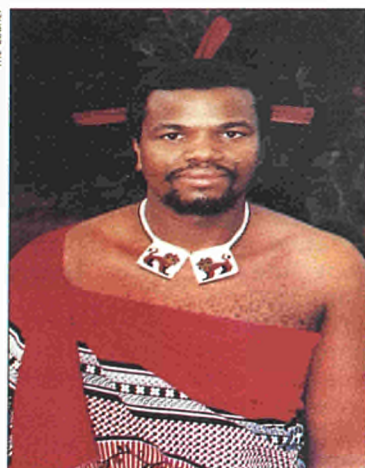
Enrolment in education: (all levels 6-23 years) 77% (1995)

Population growth rate: 3.2% (1996); 2.7% (est. 1997)

Infant mortality: 68‰

Human development index rating: 0.597 (115th out of 174)

The Courier



Sources: Economic Intelligence Unit, UNDP Human Development Report (1998). Central Bank of Swaziland, Annual Report 1997/98

Improving the investment environment

During the 1970s and 1980s, there was a significant inflow of capital funds into Swaziland, mainly because international sanctions against South Africa induced investors to look elsewhere in the region. This kept the economy afloat, but now, with the rehabilitation of Swaziland's powerful neighbour, and the emergence of competition in other parts of Southern Africa, the flow of funds has fallen drastically. 'There has been very slow movement of foreign direct investment into the country over the last five years', we were told by Derek Van Wissell, President of the Federation of Swaziland Employers. 'What investment there has been has come from the expansion of existing businesses'. Adding urgency to the search for alternative revenue-generating sources is a decline in receipts from the Southern African Customs Union (SACU). This currently contributes more than 50% of government income (see main article). In addition, the country's high population growth rate means that many school leavers join the job market each year. These young people are well-

Cotton manufacturing
In an era of economic globalisation, Swaziland is competing, not just within the region, but also in a global context – with countries such as Vietnam and the Philippines where wage rates are much lower



educated and have heightened expectations, but available employment opportunities are few.

Investment Promotion Authority established with EU support

While, according to commentators, there has traditionally been a good relationship between the government and the business sector, the state used to have a *laissez faire* attitude and did not actively set out to facilitate entrepreneurial activity. It came to be recognised that something needed to be done to attract foreign capital and build up domestic investment. Hence the decision to create an investment agency. Support for the private sector is one of the key areas in EU-Swaziland cooperation, and under the Cross-Border Initiative the EU agreed to provide regional funds for the establishment of the Swaziland Investment Promotion Authority (SIPA) in early 1998. This took the form of a provision of 10 million Emalangeni (1.5m€), over a two year period, for set-up costs, such as furniture, equipment and training. 'Swaziland is the last country in Africa to establish this kind of authority', we were told by Joe Beirne, SIPA's acting general manager. The authority's mandate is to promote both foreign and domestic investment. It also provides advice to the government on ways of improving the country's investment climate. A 'one stop shop' will be set up for investors, so that all the necessary formalities can be carried out in the same place. At the moment, 17 different authorisations are needed by investors coming into the country! The government has given SIPA authority to ensure that those services are provided.

At the time of *The Courier's* visit, a new Chairman (*Sishayi Nxumalo*, former deputy prime minister), and four new executives

Swaziland – EU cooperation 1990-2000

Lomé Convention	EDF 7 (€m)	Focal sectors	EDF 8 (€m)	Focal sectors
Lomé National Indicative Programme	28,1	Agriculture and rural development Microprojects Education and training Economic infrastructure TA/studies/general Health	29.0	Agriculture and rural development Private sector Microprojects
Regional funds	5.6	Education and studies	Total budget still to be determined	Transport/ Economic infrastructure
EIB Funds	16.0	Sugar Swaziland Industrial Development Company	10.0 ⁽¹⁾	Private sector/tourism/ infrastructure Industry/agro-industry
Other Lomé Funds				
<i>Total Lomé funding</i>	49.7		39.0	
Other EC budget lines	7.2	Food aid Constitutional Review Commission NGOs	1.4	Drought mitigation
Total	56.9			

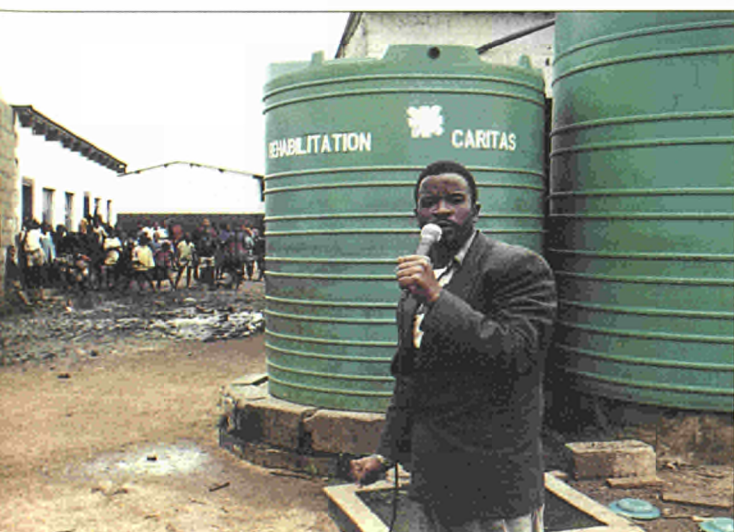
⁽¹⁾ Provisional

had just been appointed to SIPA. 'They are all locals who have worked in the private sector', Mr Beirne told us, 'and they are the cream of the young Swazi executives.'

Stiff competition

Joe Beirne recognises that attracting investment will be an 'uphill battle', because of the tough competition from elsewhere. In an era of economic globalisation, Swazi-

Siphoso primary school headmaster Henry Mabuza, speaking about the benefits of a water supply tank, funded by the EU under its microprojects programme



land is competing, not just within the region, but also in a global context – with countries such as Vietnam and the Philippines where wage rates are much lower. Current corporate tax rates are high, we were told, but a new Tax Bill has been drafted which has won the approval of the World Bank and the IMF. SIPA favours tax breaks for new investment in manufacturing, because this is seen as the sector most likely to generate employment. Mr Beirne also believes in encouraging industries that are predominantly involved in exporting their products (thus bringing in much-needed foreign currency). He has an adage which he applies to the provision of incentives: 'The principal is as little as possible, but as much as is necessary, subject only to a fair return'. He believes that giving five-year tax holidays attracts the 'worst quality' investor – people who are unlikely to put down roots in Swaziland. Better, he argues, to give a 20-year tax holiday. Even if the company is exempt from tax, benefits will come to the country in the form of employment, and other economic spin-offs.

There is also a job to be done in promoting Swaziland, something which Mr Beirne indicates has not been pursued up to now. He talks about a strategy of selective advertising based on one-to-one contacts. In other words, potential individual investors will be identified and approached – with the country's existing successful businesses being cited as a testimonial. ■ D.M.

Every picture tells a story

The Courier's trip to Swaziland coincided with a visit to EU-funded microprojects, which was organised for local media. It was clear from what we saw that those communities that are motivated to start a project themselves are the ones most likely to be successful.



At the Sikhulile Mpaka market, about 70 women sell their goods in makeshift wooden stalls. They have no protection from the elements, and as they cannot store their wares, they are obliged to take them home each day. Now a new market is being built with EU microproject support. Soon, they will be able to store their goods, enabling them to buy in bulk at cheaper prices. They will also have cooking and toilet facilities. Pictured here are members of the women's group, who were involved in the project, in front of one of the new buildings.



Maize farmers were facing bottlenecks because of insufficient storage facilities. The capacity of this silo was increased from 15,000 tonnes to 23,000. A dryer was also installed. This is important because maize with a moisture content of up to 18% can now be stored. Previously, there was no dryer available nearby. Producers had been turning away from maize, because of the high costs involved in transport and drying. It is hoped that the improved Kilanga maize silo will encourage farmers to return to maize growing, thereby reducing dependence on imported grain.



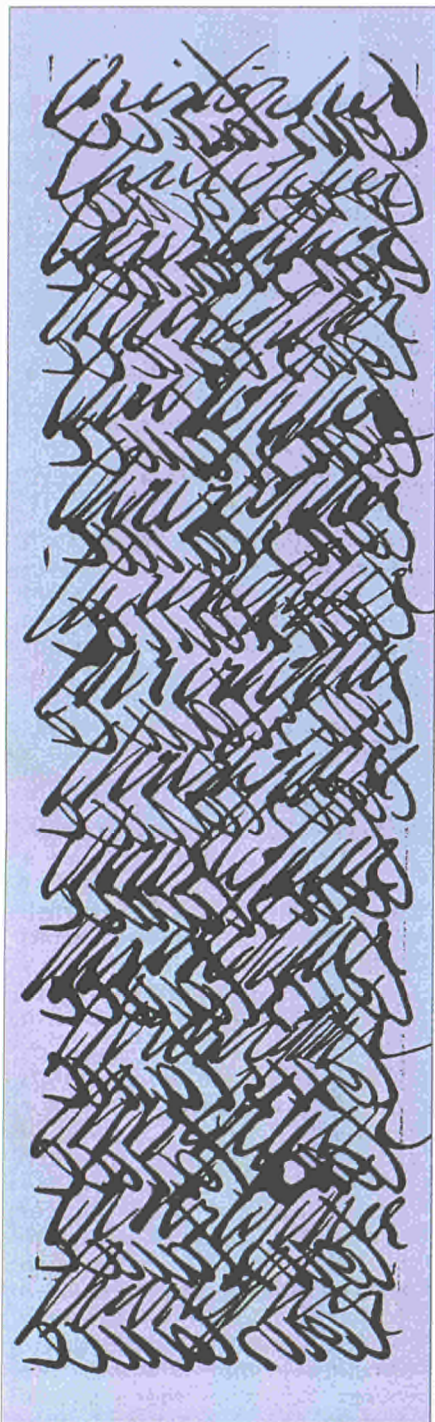
Constructed in one of the driest regions of Swaziland, the Mahhuka Dam will secure the community from drought risk. The primary purposes will be irrigation, crop-growing and livestock farming. More than 2000 households will benefit, and there should be new job opportunities in vegetable and other crop-growing. The area traditionally supports 3000-4000 cattle, but many have died of hunger in the past. Pictured here is Ephraim Hlophe of the Economic Planning and Development Ministry, who is the National Authorising Officer (NAO) for the Lomé Convention.



The parents and teachers of Ekuthokozeni community school (350 pupils and eight teachers) got together to provide themselves with new buildings. They approached the micro-projects office for help in completing the work. Ncane Dlamini, micro-projects co-ordinator, explained that the eagerness and involvement of the community was a factor in deciding on assistance. For this school, the EU provided roughly half the financing, while the community supplied the labour and some funds.

Dossier

Writing and publishing



Constance van Riellegem

The words spin round, take shape, crystallise. They tame, clarify, affirm. From pen to paper, from manuscript to book, the hours bear the successive marks of inspiration, discouragement, struggle and finally, just occasionally, victory, when the 'product' is finished.

Books are an industry like any other, with a market that is constantly growing and which *could* generate jobs. The use of the conditional here is especially appropriate when one is talking about the publishing industry in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific. In these regions, the sector is in its infancy, despite the initiatives taken by local culture 'activists'. A Herculean task faces those who believe that culture must be at the forefront of the development enterprise. The task is no less daunting for the writers themselves, who have the difficult job of fusing the creative process with the quest for development. It is a process that is constantly evolving but is no less significant for that. What meandering and wandering path finally leads the writer to ascend the much coveted podium of the published author? For any writer, there are trials and tribulations but are the difficulties encountered today the same for every author, whether he comes from the North or the South? What challenges must local publishers face as they endeavour to turn a vision into printed words on a page? In this dossier, *The Courier* offers its pages to the very people who are best qualified to answer.

As far as publishing houses in ACP countries are concerned, their 'literary mission' – which consists in encouraging creative activity and promoting and distributing books – is hampered by numerous problems. As *Editions Livres Sud* (EDILIS)¹, stresses, it is a highly complex business publishing, distributing and marketing books in Africa – and indeed throughout the world. The ACP publishing sector is not exactly thriving and the many specific difficulties it faces mean that it is constantly and chronically dependent on subsidies. First is the limited size of the market – attributable both to low literacy levels and a certain apathy about reading among those who can read. This makes large print runs impossible, especially where general literature is involved. This point was confirmed to us by *Abdoulaye Wade*, leader of the opposition in Senegal and ex-government minister, whom we met doing some book shopping in Paris's Latin Quarter. 'As a former teacher, I

deplore the fact that Africans do not read,' he told us. 'Books are inaccessible, above all because of their cost. Then there is the issue of distribution. But, more than anything else, we have to admit that we have got out of the habit of reading.' How, he asked, could people be encouraged to read? 'What we need is a policy that will enable us to reduce the price of a book to virtually nothing. We also need other resources such as reading clubs. In short we need a great deal more effort than we have seen up to now.' According to EDILIS, among others, another crippling factor is the existence of monopolies within the school book sector and the fact that contracts must be put out to international tender in other countries. This practice excludes small ACP publishers which cannot hope to compete with the subsidiaries of large overseas firms. Ultimately, what all these difficulties add up to is a poor financial return on investments. The small publishing houses cannot distribute their books, not least because of the problems they experience in actually getting paid for them.

Given that it is extremely difficult for ACP publishers to be self-sufficient, joint ventures, involving the forging of links with overseas publishers, is one possible solution. There are a number of cooperation projects that focus on providing support for the publishing industry in ACP countries. As regards the French-speaking community, *La Francophonie* is proposing to set up a fund to support the publication of general works as well as a fund for school textbooks. The aim here is to encourage the creation and consolidation of a book industry in developing countries, to stimulate creativity and to boost publishing enterprises.

Many ACP writers refuse to accept the oft-expressed view that the source of the problem is poor literacy rates, or the fact that ACP countries have an oral tradition of storytelling. They write because they know that they can and will be read. They are well aware that it will normally be easier for them to become known outside their native countries, but they still take pride in the knowledge that their most fervent fans are usually to be found back home. ACP authors write about their compatriots but also about other people. They set the scene and sit back to observe real life. In short, they do all the things that are necessary to make them into writers.

¹ EDILIS is a public limited company established under Côte d'Ivoire law. Set up in 1992, it has a share capital of 18.5 million CFAF. Its shareholders are individuals from Benin, Burkina Faso, Congo-Brazzaville, Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal.

Our words are our riches

by Nocky Djedanoum*

Who am I in the eyes of other continents and in the eyes of humanity? Who am I in the eyes of the man and woman who gave me life? Who am I in the eyes of others? What is the meaning of my existence? A thousand and one questions like these hang like a millstone around my neck. Questions that plague me every day, and that I would dearly love to shake off and leave behind me. Because I want to be able to smile at my children in the way that flowers unfurl in the warmth of the sun. Because I would like to make love to my Love, to my People and to my Continent, not to escape from my pain, but to create an intimate embrace of sincere love. But in vain! Each day I am stalked by the shadows of past and present, trapped and dragged down into their depths from where I can no longer see the horizon that draws others towards the promise of a brighter tomorrow.

The struggles of everyday life are a constant reminder to me that the road to progress must be a proactive one. But where is our economic power? Where is our political power? We have no diamond mines or oil fields, no drugs or genius for political manipulation. I did dream, one day, that buried deep within me I possessed the words that could tell of my pain and the pain of my people. For words are all the riches we have. Others, before me, have christened this *Literature*. They have even coined a special name for these tellers of tales and narrators of woes: authors.

Haunted by these words and woes, I find I have no choice but to let them spill out over my blank pages. Often, they take the form of a person, like in real life. Someone like you or me. Sometimes they shape themselves into a woman, sometimes a small child, sometimes a man. Sometimes the character is alive, sometimes it appears as a ghost. As the pages turn, one after the other, I become aware

that all these words have one thing in common: they are all obsessed with life. A life full of justice and well-being. Not that they are always in harmony, you understand. On the contrary, sometimes they clash and fight with each other, destroying one another. But the *leitmotif* is always the same: justice, love, well-being. Is this what others mean by 'progress'?

If progress means enjoying a certain freedom of speech and of action, if it means recognising one's duties and having certain rights, in short being able to attain a state of well-being, then writing fulfils this need, this supremely human need. Writing is, by its very nature, a desperate struggle against nothingness, against death. Literature is the inexhaustible desire of humanity. For with each and every word that the writer brings to life from his intense solitude, he sows the seeds of peace.

Consequently, writing about Rwanda becomes a symbolic act. It marks the turning point of my total commitment, the point when, in this land of unspeakable horrors and intense soul-searching, aloud I ask myself the question of my own responsibility in the development of my continent. Rwanda is the land where I was born African. It has given me a foothold; it has provided me with the literary canvas on which, through my pen, I now aspire to attenuate and exorcise the century-old negation of my race. The slave trade, colonisation and the endemic effects it has had, the civil wars that have broken out here, there and everywhere like macabre stars flaring up across the night sky, and finally, the bitterness of all draughts: the Rwandan genocide of April 1994.

What can I do now? What do I have left? I still have love. I still have life. I will search for the words that will speak to the rest of Africa and to the rest of the world. Believe me, I will hurt for them high and low. I will trade in words in the same way that others trade in arms. I will scour Africa and the rest of the world to proclaim my existence. From my nights haunted by the memory of our dead, from the stunning beauty of our women, from the eyes of our children, I will wrench these words and sow them far and wide. Ceaselessly will I write. As others hand out milk in refugee camps, I will share my poetry of love.

At every opportunity I will talk of Rwanda, the land of my African rebirth. An African, I was born in Rwanda. ■ N.D.

'Writers for Rwanda: a duty to keep the memory alive'

In July-August 1998, about a dozen African writers and a crew of African film-makers visited Rwanda to take part in a residential writing workshop and to film a documentary about the legacy of the genocide. The visit was arranged under the auspices of Fest'Africa, a festival of Black African literature held in Lille (France) – four years on from the massacres of Tutsis and Hutus in which more than a million died under the indifferent gaze of the international community. The main aim of the project, known as 'Writers for Rwanda: a duty to keep the memory alive', is to bring together African writers and artists – to express solidarity with the Rwandans and to enable their works to create a mood of quiet contemplation.

In April 2000, to mark the sixth anniversary of the genocide, writers and film-makers will again come together in Rwanda to take part in the eighth Fest'Africa (for the first time, part of this festival will actually be staged in Africa). The programme is deliberately ambitious. The organisers plan a week-long symposium where people will discuss the role of intellectuals in preventing and resolving African conflicts, produce a theatre and dance spectacular based on the works of the writers who attended the Rwanda workshop, and show the documentary film 'We are alive'. The event will also feature literary cafés and concerts.

After Rwanda, the writers, actors and film-makers plan to take the Festival on tour to a number of other African countries. Their aim is to meet African people in their own environment in the hope of exchanging words of peace. In the same vein, the continuation of the eighth festival in Lille, in October 2000, will be dedicated to Rwanda. It is a fortunate coincidence that Lille has also chosen 'Africa' as the theme of its millennium celebrations.

For further information contact: Fest'Africa, 9/2 Petite rue de l'Alma, 59000 Lille.

Tel: 00 33 3 20 06 21 59
E-mail: festafrica@nordnet.fr
Site Web: www.nordnet.fr/festafrica

* Responsible for setting up the project entitled 'Writers for Rwanda: a duty to keep the memory alive'.

Gillian Nyambura, Executive Secretary of the African Publishers Network (APNET)

Strengthening publishing capacity in Africa

In this interview, Gillian Nyambura details the efforts of the African Publishers' Network to help the continent fulfil its own needs for literature.

■ *Why does APNET focus on the indigenous publishing industry?*

– Africa has writers who are respected the world over – such as Chinua Achebe, Ngugi wa Thiongo and Frantz Fanon. However, the continent's better known writers have traditionally been, and still are, published by European publishing houses in France, Portugal and the UK. There is an analogy here with the amassing of raw material from Africa which is sent for processing in Europe and then re-exported to Africa. As African governments came into being through the independence struggles of the 1950s and 1960s, they adopted indigenisation and nationalisation policies to address this situation. The publishing sector was no exception. In fact it was not unusual to find government monopolies in the book industry as new states took over the responsibility of providing textbooks to meet new education requirements.

Indigenous publishers form part of what is known in the industry as the 'book chain'. Writers create the raw material with which editors, translators, illustrators, designers, printers and booksellers work. The final product, the book, then reaches the hands of the reader at the end of the chain. APNET's focus is the publisher whose task is to shape, process and package manuscripts into books. By strengthening indigenous publishers, we are able to fulfil the continent's need for its own literature – written, published and promoted in Africa. The ideal outcome is a culturally relevant product, reasonably priced, marketed innovatively and well-distributed. To achieve this, APNET works to strengthen indigenous

publishing capacity through training, trade promotion, information sharing, networking and advocacy.

■ *In times of economic liberalisation wouldn't you say that the chances of indigenous publishers emerging as strong competitors in globalised markets are becoming slimmer and slimmer?*

– It would be unrealistic to match a nascent indigenous pub-

'By strengthening indigenous publishers, we are able to fulfil the continent's need for its own literature'

lishing industry in Africa, which is barely 50 years old, with those of industrialised nations that are centuries old (the UK's Oxford University Press has been around for more than five centuries). However, even globalised markets have local realities. The way forward for well-established publishing houses to be truly competitive in global markets, is to enter into fair partnerships with indigenous publishers. We are working at local level to build the capacities of indigenous publishers, to ensure they act collectively through their professional associations/networks while promoting the creation of national publishers associations (NPAs) where they do not exist. Through such collaboration, mutual trust is increasing in the indigenous publishing industry. Platforms for the exchange of ideas and information are also becoming lobbying springboards to encourage governments, for instance, to adopt policies that protect and support indigenous publishing sectors.

■ *Do your members include multinational publishing houses?*

– At national level, our member associations (the NPAs) comprise all kinds of publishers commercial, educational, academic, institutional, NGOs, government, individual, religious and multinational. Multinational publishing houses tend to dominate the scene in Africa and they have material resources that far outweigh those of indigenous publishers. While the General Council is made up of a variety of publishers, including members from multinational operations, APNET has criteria for those eligible to take responsibility for implementing and directing its policies. Our Constitution says that: 'Only persons permanently resident in Africa and holding a bona fide position in an African publishing company which is at least 51% owned by African nationals or African-owned institutions are eligible for election to the Board'.

■ *Your members come from different regions with different languages and various levels of development. How do you coordinate such a diverse network?*

– Since its last General Council Meeting in 1997 in Bamako, APNET has had seven regions. There are the two Francophone (Central and West Africa), three Anglophone (East, West and Southern Africa), one Lusophone and one Arab-speaking region. We work in two languages, English and French, with frequent translations of key publications and correspondence into Arabic and Portuguese. It is true that history, political systems, economic systems, population and market sizes, literacy levels, transport and communication infrastructure all contribute to make a varied landscape

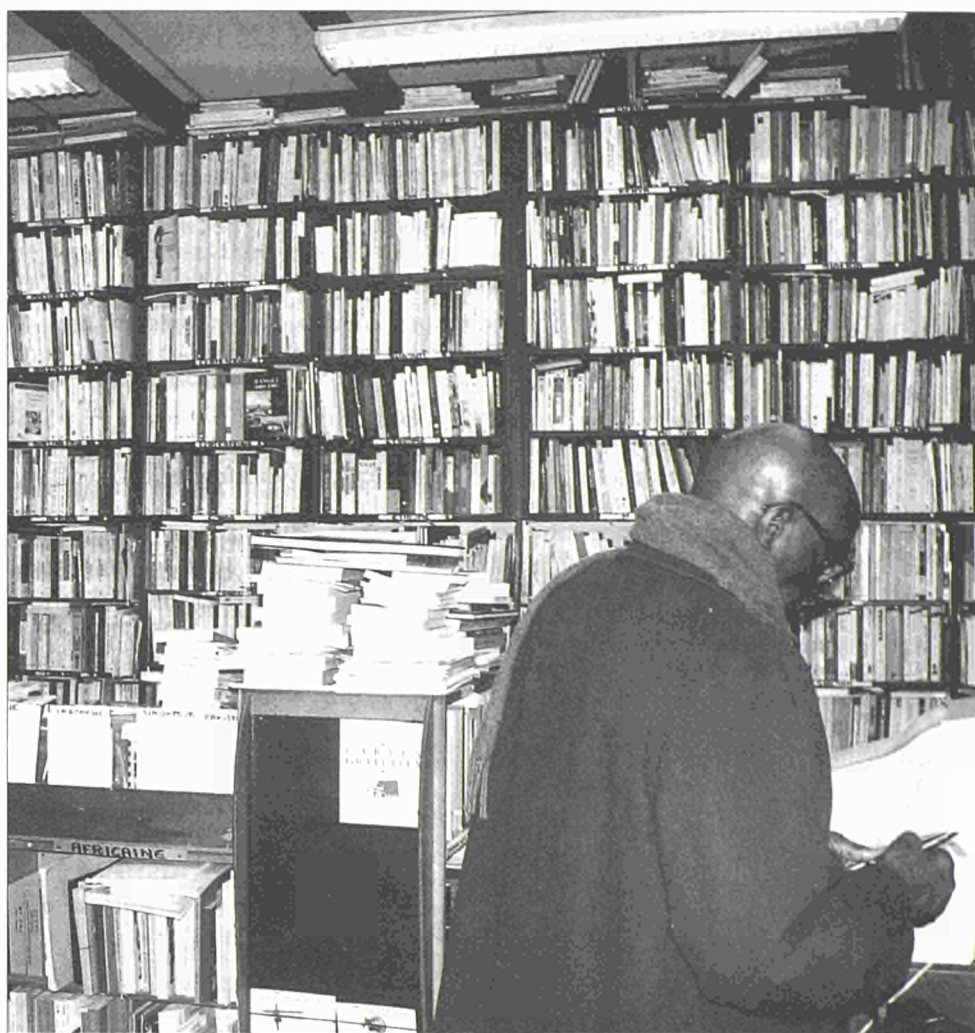
for the publishing industry in Africa. Yet we find commonalities in the challenges our members face. The needs of members tend to converge and recur. Examples include the need for training and skills in new technologies to improve the book quality and the need for information on the book industry in African countries. We have to overcome barriers to intra-African trade, marketing and the distribution of books. Then there are the lobbying and advocacy skills required to achieve the removal of taxes on inputs and raw materials such as paper. There is also a need to create avenues so that publishers can get access to credit and foreign exchange.

APNET's structure has in-built mechanisms for coordination at national level in the form of NPAs. At regional level, we have seven representatives who together form the Board and who meet twice a year. At continental level we have a General Council that meets every two years and a Secretariat in Harare, Zimbabwe. This coordinates the implementation of APNET's programmes. One of our key networking tools is the African Publishing Review which is a bi-monthly bulletin produced in English and French and which goes to all APNET members free of charge. In its pages we provide information on issues affecting indigenous publishing, new projects, new contacts, new technologies, and promote new titles. We are also working on developing an electronic mail network linking all members.

'We have to overcome barriers to intra-African trade, marketing and the distribution of books'

■ *Why should governments pay attention to indigenous publishers?*

– Governments allocate up to 40% of their national budgets to education. Part of these funds go towards the purchase of textbooks to ensure the provision of learning and teaching materials to educational institutions. To fulfil Education Ministry commitments to human resource development,



Awareness of different African cultures is transmitted and promoted through literature

it is in government's interest that the books purchased are relevant and of a quality that promotes rather than detracts from learning. Indigenous publishers' output is textbook dominated. In terms of content, publishers draw from their local knowledge to produce culturally relevant texts. Research has proven that the learning process is facilitated when reading and textbook materials relate to the learner's immediate surroundings and cultural background. It is therefore apparent that the primary selection and approval of textbooks by education ministries must begin from catalogues and examples of texts produced locally. Where these are not available, they can be sourced from neighbouring countries that have comparable contexts. This is critical if human resources are to be developed and literate populations sustained.

Any trade ministry will equally be wary of supporting multinational publishing industries

whose tendencies are to repatriate profits and to form monopolies at national and regional level. Any government will guard against turning its schools into book dumps – storehouses for 'donations' of outdated and/or irrelevant books. Or, of being dependent on imported textbooks and reading materials. Governments may perhaps decide to source materials in the short term from multinationals but only at the risk of being relegated to the role of gatekeeper or puppet for multinational interests competing in local markets. The road to long term economic sustainability and credibility in governments points to a more concerted effort to nurture and protect, through incentives and policies, the local publishing industries.

Government support to indigenous publishing can have far-reaching consequences. Tolerance

for instance, can be enhanced through books. Awareness of different African cultures is transmitted and promoted through literature. This leads to a better understanding of the diversity of ethnic groups and an appreciation of the underlying fabric of history, culture and common destiny that binds the African people.

■ *What challenges face your Network in the next five years?*

– APNET has been in existence since 1992 and in 1998 it underwent its first external evaluation conducted by COWI of Denmark. Its best achievements to date have been documented by this four-month study as follows:

‘APNET has been successful in establishing itself in 27 countries in all parts of the African continent with prospective members in yet another 14 countries. The training provided by APNET is meeting genuine needs and is well received. Over the last four years, (it) has attended 27 book fairs worldwide, mounted a collective African exhibit and facilitated 240-250 sponsorships to enable African publishers to attend book fairs. APNET has exploited its comparative advantage by supporting all-African research on topics highly relevant to the publishing environment. APNET has gained recognition and has contributed to placing African publishing on the map.’

Based on this report and the discussions held in Copenha-

gen in December 1998 with APNET donors, the next three-year programme (1999-2002) will seek to develop our activities in a number of areas (see box).

‘The liberalisation of political and economic systems is opening up previously isolated nations and opportunities for indigenous publishers are being created’

■ *Does your office in Harare have the capacity to handle the forthcoming programme?*

– We have five members of staff at the Secretariat, three of whom are responsible for coordinating implementation of the training, trade promotion, and capacity-building programmes. In 1999, we will be recruiting an information officer as well as an international relations officer who will be responsible for donor relations, fund-raising and resource mobilisation. We obviously do not work alone. The planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of APNET’s activities are done with members at NPA level, and with the APNET Board and General Council. We also rely heavily on APNET consultants, founder members and programme committees. We are continuously

working to improve the effectiveness of our work as the coordinating organ in the APNET structure. This is a challenge.

■ *What reason do you have for being optimistic when so many people are saying everything is in bad shape for African books?*

– Pessimism is an industry all of its own! Europe is preoccupied with economic unity more evident now with the launch of the Euro early this year. Attention in recent years has turned away from Africa and the Third World to pressing problems at home, and in Eastern Europe. It is therefore not surprising to hear of pessimism in Europe toward Africa. But here on the continent, we are optimistic. The liberalisation of political and economic systems is opening up previously isolated nations and opportunities for indigenous publishers are being created. APNET continues to receive the support of donors, primarily development agencies in Scandinavia, and is gradually winning the respect of governments and regional groupings. Indigenous publishing houses are sprouting as governments privatise and retrench. We, in fact, look to a qualitative change as well as quantitative growth in our membership. To quote the evaluation report: ‘As publishers increasingly make use of computers in the production of books... it seems women especially are poised to take advantage of computer technology, perhaps because women in Africa are often the most computer literate.’ APNET is being invited to join in initiatives celebrating an African renaissance in the new millennium such as the *Ubuntu* movement (promoting synergies between cultural networks), and *Against All Odds* (a conference to be held in 2000 on African languages). Changes are taking place on the continent and they provide grounds for optimism.

Key elements of APNET’s programme for 1999-2002

The APNET programme for the next three years aims to:

- strengthen the capacity, management and membership of APNET;
- focus on policy issues;
- expand APNET’s advocacy efforts at promoting African publishers;
- institutionalise cooperation with donors and partners promoting publishing in the context of book policy and development in Africa;
- make the APNET resource centre fully operational and continue promoting research on issues relevant to indigenous publishing;
- prepare high quality catalogues, promotional materials and collective exhibits and conduct relevant seminars, workshops and meetings at book fairs;
- organise training workshops at national and regional level;
- explore linkages with institutions offering publishing training in Africa;
- continue producing ‘African Publishing Review’;
- develop a website.

A writer and her readers

by Michèle Rakotoson

Michèle Rakotoson is a novelist, playwright and short story writer. Originally from Madagascar, she now lives in Paris, having left her country for political reasons in 1983. She has written four novels, the latest of which, Henoÿ – Fragments en écorce, is published by Luce Wilquin. She has also given us plays in French and in Malagasy (such as Sambany, Raha ho very aho ry lery) which have been performed in her own country and published by the Madagascan Publishing Company in Antananarivo. Here, she offers a personal account of her writing experience.

It is difficult to talk about the way my work is received in the West, because really I have only a very subjective view of it. I get this from knowing how many copies of my books are sold and from talking to readers I encounter at public meetings, or from a few research dissertations on some of my books – in particular my first novel. This information suggests an ambiguous and paradoxical state of affairs. For, in fact, the public, or at least those readers with access to my work, seem to like it, while professionals, journalists and critics, continue to snub the texts – mine and those of most other African writers, I might add.

This contradiction can perhaps be explained by the fact that, in reality, the public I meet is already 'in the know'. These readers, we can assume, have already been won over. The general public, on the other hand, does not seem interested. This is only logical, perhaps, in that my books are essentially about my native land of Madagascar, and therefore it is to be expected that they will only interest people who are familiar with the country or people who, for whatever reason, want to read about it.

Perhaps the fact that I am a woman has not helped me much, either. Ultimately, though, it is these 'relative and real difficulties' which have given me the freedom to create my own personal literary style. For literature is not the same thing as journalism. It is not about reporting the bare facts, but about trying to create something that transcends mere narrative and which tries to evoke with words the essential human

emotions – the dramas, the loves, the important questions – and thereby to access the universal. This is what makes the implicit exclusion of African texts so disturbing.

The 'literary market', you see, appears to function according to increasingly clear-cut criteria. Broadly speaking, there are two ways of making a 'literary career'. You can turn yourself into a marketed product and, in a flash, enjoy instant fame in the full glare of the media spotlight. Alternatively, you can quietly go about building your career over a long period. But this is extremely perilous, since it means you are under permanent threat of 'extinction'. Publishers willing to risk taking on an author who, however highly regarded, is not sufficiently well-known are few and far between. A writer who goes unpublished and unread is a dead writer – and look at how many writers have met this fate on our continent?

As for that dazzling career in the media spotlight, which these days seems to be essential for survival, it follows the dictates of the market place. 'They' (the publisher or series editor) try to define the 'mood of the moment' or some fashionable new trend. They then select a 'product': the novel or writer (gifted or otherwise) to match this mood. This well-packaged product is then launched onto the literary market with a tightly orchestrated media campaign (TV, radio, press attachés and so on) generally lasting no more than three months.

It can work, especially if it is a good product. There are dangers, however. The 'mood of the moment' can turn sour, through no fault of the work's

creator, and the writer may then find himself obliged to uphold views which, deep down, he is hard put to justify. The mounting 'hype' may help quell his uneasiness. In any event, these 'market forces' – which have nothing to do with art – are extremely perverse. A fashionable product can very soon go out of fashion.

Fortunately, literature is not always subject to these forces. Readers are increasingly turning to genuine literary expression, to reflective works, and this allows for the existence of 'idiosyncratic' books, in the face of trenchant opposition. This is where the African book comes in.

The African book does not adhere to the criteria of the gen-



Michèle
Rakotoson

Henoÿ
Fragments en écorce

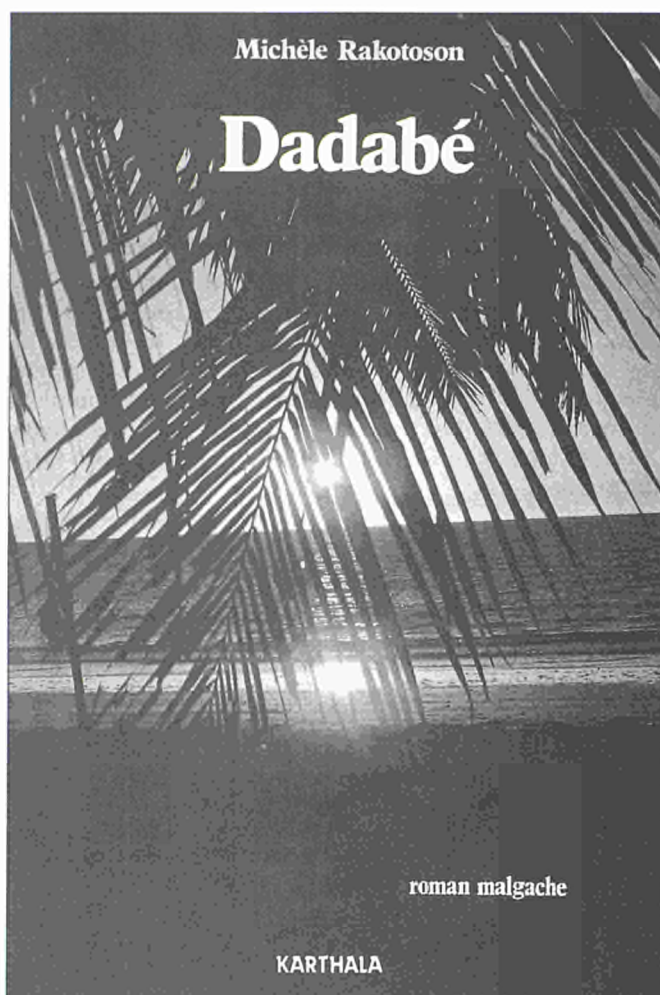
ÉDITIONS LUCE WILQUIN

eral book market. It sells over a very long period of time and has a 'true readership', which follows its authors and, often, seeks to forge a special relationship with them.

In evidence I can cite readers who approach me at conferences and debates. Also, there are increasingly, those who approach me in the street to talk about my first novels – which were published nearly 15 years ago and are now out of print. People often tell me they regret this because they would like to make gifts of them today. The books are no longer available yet they have survived for 10 or 15 years – and might well continue to be talked about for a long time. They are not products for mass consumption, but books – which would very soon have been pulped had they been printed by big publishing houses. In the first year, I sold just 400 copies of *Dadabé*. It was only after that that things took off.

I should mention that, when this work came out, it was completely ignored by the media. Maybe this was simply because, in *Dadabé* in particular, I deliberately avoided being fashionable. At a time when it was the done thing to talk about socialism, the class struggle and politics, I (despite being an inveterate left-winger) wrote a 'woman's book', in which a little middle-class Madagascan woman speaks of her solitude in the face of life, death and motherhood.

It took no less than two years for this book to gain any recognition! Two years for readers, particularly women, to get to know it, champion it and spread the news about it by word of mouth. The same fate befell *Le bain des reliques*. In fact, it had an even harder time, because it was written in a very classical style.



African writers were supposed to 'violate' the French language. It is also a highly political book, which people always seem to find disconcerting in a woman. In spite of breaking all the unspoken rules, these two works became 'classics'.

This is where the paradox comes in. These books were saved by word of mouth, and also by the fact that they were brought out by a small publishing house and promoted by very often small-scale professional booksellers. The combination of all these 'little things' enabled my books to reach their readers, who took them up – and allowed me to become a writer. The long gestation period I had, waiting for recognition, gave me time to mature and to ease myself gently into writing. This is perhaps what makes for serenity. A writer needs appreciative readers; their loyalty allows her to keep writing. This is what fascinates me about our relationship with books. A book is like a message in a bottle,

thrown out to sea by its author. Often, nothing is heard in response for months, even years, until one day, you hear a remark, or somebody asks a question. A stranger comes up to you and says 'I preferred your first book' or 'how did you know that it's exactly like that?' or one of the greatest things a writer can be told by a reader: 'I felt as if you were talking about me'. You know then that you were right to shut yourself away for months. Even if only one person gets that out of reading the book, it is worth writing it.

What can I say about the way my books are received? I honestly do not know. All I know is that, whenever I go back to Madagascar, my family welcomes me with open arms and tells me: 'carry on, keep writing, write about us'. Here too, on this side of the world, readers – gener-

ally women – have spoken to me with great affection for my work, which only enhances my love of writing. It is rather like being possessed: it pushes you onwards, come what may.

Now, however, it is time to raise the alarm. Some of the economic policies being implemented will wipe out the small publishing houses, the small booksellers and, ultimately, the writers. African literature is in an extremely precarious situation. Is it on the brink of extinction? I think the threat may be far greater than we realise. ■ M.R.

African Books Collective and African literature

by Mary Jay*

African Books Collective (ABC) is an initiative of a group of 17 publishers who established, co-own, and govern the organisation. Founded in 1989, it works within the context of capacity-building and support for the indigeneous and autonomous African publishing industry. Its prime purpose is more effectively to promote and disseminate African-published material in the major English-language book markets outside Africa; and in this way, to increase export sales earnings of member publishers. Two needs are addressed: the need of African publishers to get their wealth of output onto the shelves of libraries, bookshops and other book buyers in the North, and the need of libraries and others who face often insuperable problems in the acquisition of African publications.

Within this overall context, ABC concentrates on two further main areas. We disseminate information and materials about the African publishing industry, and ourselves publish some resource guides primarily for the African book communities. We promote intra-African trade through the *Intra-African Book Support Scheme* (IABSS), run in partnership with the major UK charity, *Book Aid International*. Recipient-request led, and donor-funded, the scheme supplies African-published books to African libraries – university, rural, public, schools etc. – and institutions, and other community organisations.

The background to the initiative was the very weak distribution to markets outside Africa. Distribution in any case has been the poor relation in the book chain both within and outside Africa. Lack of access to capital, poor infrastructure, difficulties of communication, and lack of purchasing power within Africa, are some of the factors contributing to this historical situation. And for the overseas markets, there was the added factor of publishers competing individually with well-funded conglomerates in the North. Production of appropriate and attractive catalogues, access to mailing lists, attendance at book fairs and so on, were all obstacles. And all too often publishers were not receiving fair returns for the books which did reach Northern customers. Most dealers visiting

Africa buy books at local prices, often at huge discounts. However, the publisher do not benefit from the US dollar and pound sterling mark-up resulting from sales in the North. And there have been cases of dealers going out of business owing money to African publishers. Also, until relatively recently, publishers were denied access to precious hard currency earnings.

Activities

So what even the most 'successful' African publisher could do not individually, they could perhaps do collectively. Other publishers fitting the ABC profile and whose lists are suitable for joint promotion have joined, and membership now stands at 44 publishers from 12 countries. The crucial point about the operation is that the publish-

ers receive the benefit from their overseas earnings. ABC prices books for the overseas markets, and remits to publishers on average 60% of the net sales proceeds – based on the US dollar and £ sterling overseas prices. The income that ABC retains is a contribution to the promotion work and overheads; and the shortfall over expenditure is met by donor support. The group of donors who support ABC do so in the context of support and development of African publishing. African publishers are, of course, primarily producing for their own domestic markets. As well as promoting African writing and scholarship, and awareness of

From left to right Walter Bgoya (Mkukina Nyota Publishers and member of ABC's Council of Management); Niyi Osundare (one of Africa's greatest poets, winner of the Noma Award and the Commonwealth Writers Prize) and Tess Onwueme (a leading playwright)

African Books Collective



* African Books Collective.



Shimmer Chinodya, Zimbabwean novelist and winner of the Commonwealth Writers Prize

lished its own Web site with full on-line ordering facilities. Titles are also mounted at the Internet Bookshop, a major commercial outlet.

African literature – cultural pride and the economics of publishing

So what does this mean for African literature and publishing in the English-speaking countries of Africa? Together with the *Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation*, ABC brought together key writers and publishers, in Tanzania in 1998, following on from an earlier seminar on 'The Future of Indigenous Publishing in Africa' in 1996. That earlier seminar called for a group of writers and publishers to come together with the aim of working out a 'New Deal' which would result in a more united approach to the problems and challenges of strengthening African literature and culture. Discussing a 'New Deal' in 1998, writers and publishers agreed and disagreed on a number of issues, but they were united in their common view that literary publishing should respond to the needs of a society in transition, that creative writing in Africa needs nurturing, and that a renewed socially responsible commitment was required on the part of both publishers and writers.

There are two key factors which have a bearing on every aspect of the current state and the 'future' of African literature. First, its importance and place within the culture and development of the continent. 'The lack of a reading culture' is a much bandied about conventional wis-

dom, but it is perhaps superficial in some of its assumptions. Lack of purchasing power and poorly stocked libraries are a major factor. The concentration on texts equipping young people for finding work is inevitably at the expense of literature for life enhancement. And judgments made about what is available may not take into account local language publishing. There is a dearth of this. There is a multiplicity of languages and such publishing carries the additional burden of a much smaller market than a European/African language which can 'travel'.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o is perhaps one of Africa's best known writers, and his English-language novels are widely admired. But even his enterprising and resourceful publisher in Kenya, *Henry Chakava*, has reported difficulties in making the figures work for publishing his writing in Gikuyu. There is no reason to suppose that African societies would be any less receptive to reading English-language – or any other language – literature if living and employment conditions bore comparison with more economically developed countries. ABC's experience through the Intra-African Book Support Scheme is that there is a huge desire for literature. The scheme is barely scratching the surface of this demand. It hardly needs stressing that the cultural integrity and economic prosperity of a country depends upon an educated citizenry. Indeed, for a healthy country, the two are indivisible.

Irene Staunton of Baobab Books Harare, in conversation with *Femi Osofisan*, playwright and novelist



African issues, the benefit of the overseas sales is an important contribution to the ability to publish for Africa. The earnings contribute to the publishers' efforts to redress the traditional dominance of the capitalised multinationals, and to make available culturally relevant materials for markets where acute shortages of such books (together with lack of purchasing power) perpetuate low educational attainments, and a paucity of literature for a developing civic society.

The founding publishers established ABC in the North, since the core work is promoting, marketing and distributing books outside Africa. It is common practice worldwide for publishers to have marketing and distribution organised from within the territories which they are accessing. Northern markets and promotion opportunities are very different from those prevailing within Africa. ABC is the exclusive distributor of English-language titles of its member publishers, with the exception of textbooks. Academic books, literature, children's books, and general books on African culture and heritage are stocked. Promotion and marketing covers the full range of activities open to publishers: joint catalogues – twice-yearly listings of new titles, subject catalogues, children's and general trade catalogues; exhibition participation; entry onto international bibliographical databases; advance information; flyers; review copies; display advertising; trade representation etc. The Internet is being harnessed. Two academic sites have hosted the list for some time, and in 1998, ABC estab-



African Books Collective

Kole Omotoso, essayist and critic

Books are a crucial tool of cultural integrity, as reflected in the words of *Niyi Osundare*, the Noma laureate and one of Africa's great poets, who called for 'respect for the book as an indispensable part of the world's cultural and intellectual heritage'. Whilst African literature publishing is primarily for Africa, it is also the means to convey and promote understanding and knowledge outside Africa and the equal standing of African literature with other world cultures.

The second element is the multiplicity of factors hindering the publication and sale of English-language African literature. Publishing literature is risky anywhere. *Walter Bgoya*, the Tanzanian publisher, has said; 'If you want to publish a novel you must start with the knowledge that you won't make money on it'. This view is echoed by *Dafe Otabo*, the Nigerian publisher with a prize-winning fiction list. In Africa, publishing is hardly recognised as a strategic industry in cultural and economic development, and yet it is integral to it. Southeast Asian countries have shown the political will to protect and support their own cultural industries. We have also seen this in Europe where France, for example, has shown resistance to the dominance of its cinema by American imports. African publishers – and this is not wholly unique to Africa – depend on the lucrative textbook market to subsidise or finance literature pub-

lishing. But in many parts of Africa they have been, or still are, at an unfair disadvantage against the activities and methods of the foreign-owned companies who cream off this market. And such publishers rarely retain the profits in Africa, or plough them back into literature publishing or the development of the publishing infrastructure. As *James Tumusiime*, the Ugandan publisher says: 'Unless the publishing of textbooks and educational books takes root on the continent, it will be very, very difficult to promote African writing and local-language publishing.'

Negative images

Selling African literature overseas is, in ABC's experience, an uphill task. Despite having three Nobel laureates (Egypt, Nigeria, and South Africa), African literature is not in the mainstream in the same way as the literatures of, say, Latin America, India, and Japan. In the words of *Taban Lo Liyong*, the Sudanese writer, 'We are being represented by our feet rather than our heads. African footballers rather than writers are representing Africa.' ABC is not just trying to tap the markets. It is having to stimulate market creation. Negative images of Africa in the media do not encourage exploration of the rich written culture, past acquisitions problems have contributed to a lack of awareness, and writers have published in the North to be more sure of exposure and higher earnings. ABC enables the member publishers to offer African writers returns from overseas prices. And in the longer term, it is hoped that this will forge close writer-publisher relations within Africa.

The volume of fiction, drama and literary criticism which ABC manages to sell is relatively small, although it comes about fifth in the ranking order of over 30 subject areas in which we sell. Poetry is even harder to sell. But top of the list is 'folklore and oral tradition'. Whilst this is welcome, there is nonetheless a conundrum: 'Are we to promote the notion, 'I dance therefore I am'? This is still the image of Africa, at a period when the continent is producing scientists, physicists

and 'people who can measure a thousandth of a second' in the words of *Kole Omotoso*, the distinguished writer, essayist and literature professor.

Conclusion

There was a flowering of autonomous African publishing in the post-independence 1970s and early 1980s. Since then, available statistical evidence supports the view that literature publishing overall in English-speaking countries has been on the decline. Of course, the picture varies between regions and countries, with Zimbabwe the bright spot in the 1990s. One of the contributory factors has been the decline and near extinction of literary periodicals and the 'little magazines', which gave voice to new and aspiring writers. Despite all the problems, and however small the output, African literary publishing remains alive. Great novelists, dramatists and poets, holders of part of the key to Africa's 'second liberation', continue the engagement; and some publishers continue the struggle to play their part in the cultural and wider development of the continent. But not enough of the great writers are heard, and not enough of the publishers can survive on this kind of publishing. What riches await those in Africa and elsewhere who discover some of the great joys of African writing! Our joy can play its part in removing barriers to Africa taking its rightful place in world cultures. ■

M.J.

An African writer's duty to be sincere and lucid

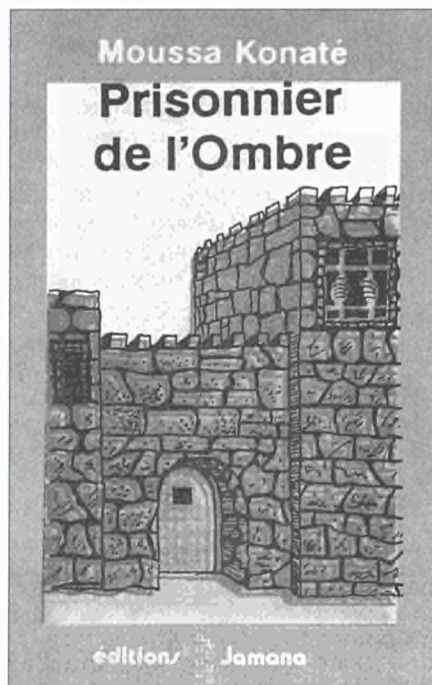
by Moussa Konaté

Moussa Konaté is a prolific author from Mali. His works include Fils du chaos, Mali, ils ont assassiné l'espoir, Chronique d'une journée de répression, L'or du Diable and Le Cercle au Féminin (all published by Harmattan).

Despite the praiseworthy efforts of certain well-meaning people to prove the contrary, or at least to put situations into context, there is no escaping the obvious: things are going badly in Africa. No amount of speculation, condemnation or despairing pessimism can change the harsh reality: unending wars (tribal or otherwise), dictatorships of differing degrees, epidemics, poverty and all kinds of human misery. In this huge continent, where nothing ever seems to work out as it should, if anyone is ill at ease, Africa's writers undoubtedly are.

If we examine African literature, we realise that it reflects the contemporary history of Africa: the mistakes and illusions with which contemporary Africa's path is strewn are those of its writers, too. The colonial period is represented by a literature of struggle, exalting the deep cultural values of the continent. Reading the literature of that time, one could be forgiven for thinking that all the evils of Africa derived exclusively from colonisation and slavery, and that independence represented a return to the realm of childhood, the rebirth of an eternal Africa of solidarity and moderation in the face of the greedy, inhuman West. Works were written then, which, admittedly, helped to shape the awareness of millions of African citizens, but their weakness was that they were confined within the limitations of that period. The 1960s saw many African states achieve independence. Paradoxically, that historic event coincided with a deafening silence from Africa's writers, as if they had suddenly realised that independence was a beginning, not an end.

It took a few years of dictatorship, famine and war for writers to rediscover their former vehemence. In the works of this period,



the new villains were the politicians, replacing the colonists and slave traders. And, of course, the victims were the same as ever: the African people, wanting nothing more than to live as their ancestors had in a world where human values still counted for something.

Since then, African writers seem to have been seeking in vain for a reason to exist. From time to time, admittedly, a work appears which recalls the turmoil of earlier years, but there is no denying that the continent's writers – once the glorious period of 'liberation' had ended – gradually lost the appeal they had held for a certain sector of public opinion.

This, of course, is the age of 'democratisation', of 'opening up to the world', but African writers have

still to regain the voice they had in their years of exaltation.

The French Romantics popularised the concept of the poet as the beacon of humanity, and their message was highly attractive to writers emerging from a tortured people. Then came all the liberationist, egalitarian ideologies. The African author – though he seems unaware of the fact – only made contact with the world through the intermediary of the West. His methods of analysis and his understanding are those of the West. His mistakes and illusions are also those of the ideologies in which he has been steeped. How many of those who claimed to understand and defend 'their people' knew what 'their people' amounted to? Who, indeed, gave writers the authority to be the conscience of their people?

It was, no doubt, the African author's first mistake to believe he had been given a mission by some undefined and indefinable authority. In fact, people adopt missions – but no mission is imposed on anyone. This concept of the writer's role has misled African writers, to the extent that anyone who picked up a pen felt under an obligation to deliver a message – to play the prophet. The result is a repetitive literature that often lacks spontaneity and conviction.

The Manichaeism that has overcome African writers (the people are good, the rest are corrupt) was therefore predictable, as was the doubt that grew from it, that dare not speak its name. If a writer can be regarded as a beacon, it is not so much because he has a mission as because he has the ability to rise above the confusion – above the moment. The African author,

The harsh reality, according to Moussa Konaté, is that 'things are going badly in Africa'



long condemned to silence, the descendant of slaves and the colonised, found it difficult to escape passion. That is why, convinced that everything in the world is what it seems, he has never asked himself the real questions, questions like: why did this happen to us? Could it be that the fear of receiving a truthful answer has driven him to seek refuge?

The African writer is not a race apart, though his story is an unusual one. The first duty imposed upon him is, as it were, a duty of freedom. No one compels him to choose his themes: there is nothing dishonourable in writing of love or nature, in having doubts, in expressing disagreement with popular opinion. He may feel the weight of the world on his shoulders, but there is nothing objectionable or chimerical in that. The essential thing is to be sincere.

His next duty is to be lucid. Africa is a ravaged land, yes, but Africans are no angels. They must certainly take their share of responsibility for the misfortunes that appear to have taken up residence in their lands. Similarly, the faceless people, without flaws, without responsibility, can exist only in minds that do not want to know. A people is made up of individuals, with the qualities and defects of individuals. The peoples of Africa are no exception. This is self-explanatory, and it must be accepted if one hopes to achieve anything.

Finally, there is a duty of courage: the courage to acknowledge one's mistakes and confront popular opinion – at the risk of being marginalised. Because it is much easier and less dangerous to tell the truth to others than to tell it to oneself and one's own kind. African writers, in general, have preferred to keep quiet about inconvenient truths.

As the offspring of his environment, the African writer is like any other African: fear of the future prevents him cutting the umbilical cord. Yet he must do so if he sees it as his mission to help others. The only benefit he can offer them is to write as his heart dictates. In any case, what more generous gift can a writer offer? ■

M.K.

Alain Mabanckou 'Daring to be individual'

Alain Mabanckou is a young author from Congo Brazzaville. He began his career with five collections of verse, most of them published by Harmattan. His first novel, Bleu blanc rouge, was published by Présence Africaine in April 1998. He lives in France, where he went to study law. Aged 32, with the manner of a dynamic young executive, he forms part of an African literary movement that boldly draws on new themes. The Courier was able to interview him while he was visiting his publisher in Paris.



– The reason I decided on novels was because poetry is the preserve of more confidential, more instantaneous moments. My inspiration came from observing the way that foreigners live in France, and the fascination it held for us in Africa when I was young. My story is a portrait of African society on red alert, unaware of the secret face of what attracts it so strongly.

The novelist's vocation is to try to dress the wounds of society. My character, Massa-Massala, is fascinated by Mocky 'the Parisian' who only occasionally returns to his country. Massa-Massala will do anything to follow him there. In doing so, he will encounter the same kind of problems as any immigrant, with increasingly specific difficulties: youth, fascination with the West, how to experience French culture. Many readers will identify with his journey. This is a story which resembles their stories, which speaks to them personally, and according to the feedback I have received, people recognise themselves in the book. The problem is the problem of contemporary life.

■ *Do you see France as a 'stage' that French-speaking African writers have to go through?*

– No. But there is no point in pretending. If you publish a book here, it has a better chance of reaching a wider public. This is principally because there are few publishers in Africa. Also, a lot of writers who are published in Africa try to get the same works printed in

France so that they can be distributed in Europe. Distribution is easier when you publish here, and especially with a house like Présence Africaine, which has been around for over 50 years and has published some big names, works by Senghor, major works by Anta Diop, and so on. France, then, is always a culminating point for literature. But the same thing is true for provincial French writers. It is easier for them to be published in the Latin Quarter than in their home town. And, of course, there is no overlooking the fact that literary events begin in France, too.

■ *Did you try to find a publisher in the Congo?*

– No, because there are virtually no publishing houses in the Congo. Ten years ago there was just one national printing works that brought out books, but that was more a matter of self-publishing or 'vanity' press. I had no great interest in having my books published in the form of photocopies or distributed surreptitiously. Especially since publishers cannot make a livelihood from poetry. So I began distributing them little by little in France when I got here. It was no easy task, because I had to go the rounds, knocking on every door.

■ *How are your books promoted?*

– Présence Africaine deals with that: they ordered a maximum print run, with copies distributed to most book shops in France, Belgium and even North America. For my part, I accept invitations from journalists, especially from RFI and Africa No. 1. I attend conferences and other events. But it is not the author's job to promote his book.

BLEU BLANC ROUGE

■ *Do you feel you need to emphasise the fact that you are an African writer?*

– Very much so. As they say, 'a tadpole can swim but that doesn't make him an alligator'. It's all very well for me to write in a way that says I am a universal writer, but the fact remains that I am still an African, and the African side of me always comes out in my work. I think of myself as a writer, but a writer who has not forgotten that he is an African.

■ *How do you picture your readership in Africa?*

– A readership which is currently paralysed by the price of books and devaluation of currencies. And we suffer from that, because we publish in Europe and people at home, in Africa, don't read us. We are only read by a few intellectuals visiting the country who drop in on the FNAC or our publishing houses. But our readership is one to which many concessions have to be made, first and foremost to ensure that they can gain access to what we write.

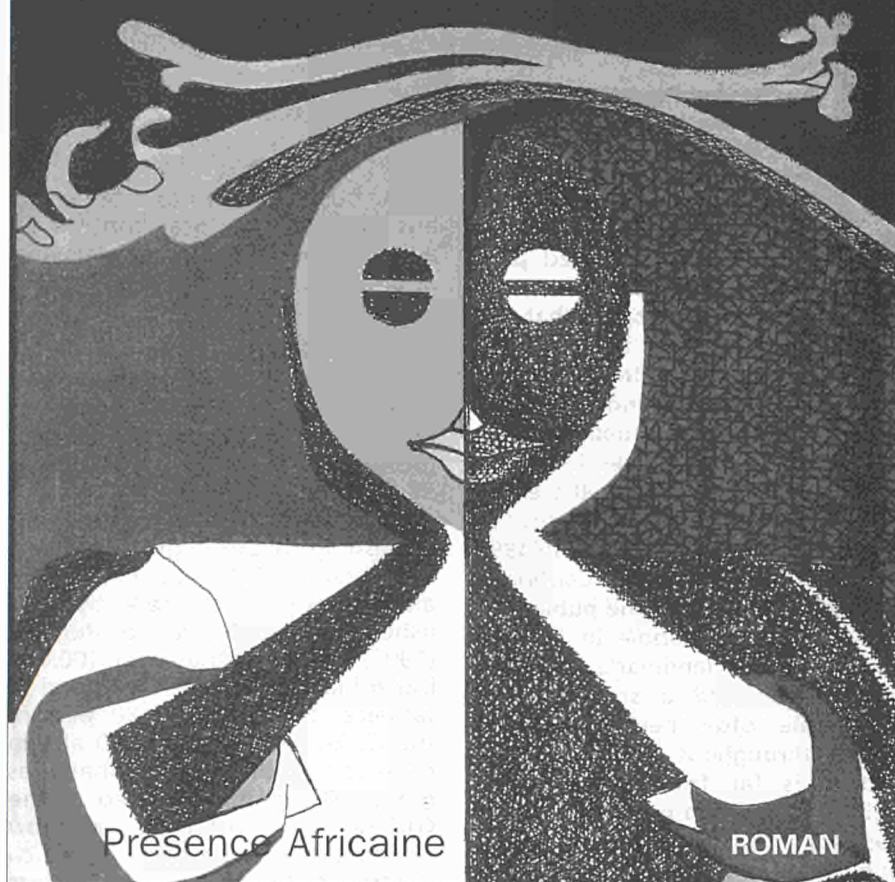
■ *Do you think there is anything specific you can do for publishing in Africa?*

– My dream is to persuade publishers to make donations to libraries and cultural centres. I myself began to read at the French cultural centres, and that is the line that should be followed. But when you publish a book, you are not its owner. You receive royalties in exchange for signing away your rights. It becomes the property of a publisher. If I want a thousand copies sent to bookshops in Bamako or Niamey, I have to foot the bill myself.

■ *Are you a member of an 'author's club', mingling with other authors from the ACP states?*

– Certainly! Most of the African and West Indian authors are my friends. In any case, I often visit the West Indies. My second novel, due out shortly, is set there. I meet with them all, the distinguished writers like Kourouma or Boubacar Boris Diop and the younger ones like Waberi from Djibouti, Raharimanana from Madagascar or Kossi Effi from Togo. We are all of the same generation, and we meet from time to time on the same discussion panels.

■ *What themes distinguish the writers of your generation from their predecessors?*



– We have a cult of the personality, the individual. Not an egotistic individual, but we have understood that by focusing on the individual in society one can try to put things right. Today, the biggest problems facing Africa relate to issues involving minorities. So we elect to cover the individual's place in society. In *Bleu, Blanc, Rouge*, the journey of a man like Mocky is not handled as a collective project, as in the days of 'black' literature when there were collective ideals to be defended and no need to think too clearly about why you were defending them. People defended them for the whole African continent, but this is a huge area. The problems of a Senegalese, for example, are not the same as those facing a Congolese. So we try to identify what is specific about each people, each individual. The journey each of us makes is a personal journey, but one that will later become fused into a collective project.

■ *What do you think of as the heritage of 'black' literature?*

– What I inherited from it is that I am proud of being myself, and I am grateful for that. I also inherited the passion for Africa, but in saying that I am slightly different in that I believe it is wrong always to inflate Africa into a vast and sometimes demagogic ideal. You have to address each problem and see it through to the end, even if that means you only address a single issue. There is no point getting bogged down in broad statements of principle that you are unable to tackle properly even if you had 30,000 years to spare!

■ *What do you see as the function of culture in development?*

– There will never be any development without culture, because it is culture that lays down the line that development has to follow.

Interview by A.K.

Anglophone Caribbean literature: towards the millennium

by Jeremy Poynting*

More than thirty years after most English-speaking Caribbean nations achieved political independence, how far is it possible to say that the literatures of those states have achieved independence from the agendas of the metropolitan publishing industry? There has been undoubted progress: the emergence of the *University of the West Indies Press* in 1992 and its associated *Caribbean Review of Books*, and the publishing activities of *Ian Randle* in Jamaica are significant landmarks, but beyond these and a scattering of small-scale, often heroic individual efforts throughout the region, the picture is far from encouraging. Neither of the two publishers above has, for instance, engaged in the publication of either fiction or poetry.

Compare the example of the reggae/dancehall industry in Jamaica with the position of books and publishing. Since the mid 1960s, reggae has been a truly national cultural industry. It has been the product, in the main, of locally-owned studios, it has been produced almost exclusively by Jamaicans and it has enabled a significant number of artists to stay in Jamaica and achieve significant levels of wealth. Reggae has been absorbed into the repertoire of the international popular

music business, but has retained its authenticity and local control. Its aesthetic innovations – deejaying and dub – have been hugely influential on contemporary popular music.

There are also huge and significant contrasts of scale between the reggae industry and the production of imaginative writing in Jamaica, (the location of the most significant interventions in publishing in the English-speaking Caribbean). Between the 1970s and the present, the recently published *Rough Guide to Reggae* (1997) estimates that over 100,000 individual records were released in Jamaica. For the 1970-80 period, the *Guide* lists over 600 CD album reissues and there are probably as many CDs again not listed in the *Guide*. By contrast, *Kamau Brathwaite's* exhaustive *Jamaica Poetry: A Check List* (1979) lists only 70 collections of poetry written by Jamaicans in the same

Statue of Bob Marley in Jamaica
Since the mid 1960s, reggae has been a truly national cultural industry



Jamaica Tourist Board/Granville Allen

period, one of the most productive in Jamaican writing, and certainly more than in the 1990s. Of these only 31 were published in the country, and most of these were small self-published works. Between 1969-1982, the flow of adult novels by Jamaicans amounted to no more than 15, only five of which were published in Jamaica.

The relationships between Jamaica and the metropolitan centres with respect to reggae and imaginative writing are also wholly different. There is interchange between Kingston and the reggae-focused recording industries of London and New York, but there is no doubting the fact that it is Kingston which is the senior player. It is true that a number of artists, most significantly *Bob Marley*, were taken up by the multinational recording industry (and their music significantly adapted for non-Jamaican consumption in the process) but the fact that major metropolitan record labels such as *Island* or *Virgin* no longer have a real interest in reggae (other than in reissue packages) has not impacted very noticeably on the industry.

This is very far from the position of Caribbean imaginative literature. Here the major players have been the multinationals *Longman* and *Heinemann* with their respective Caribbean writers series. Both have recently disbanded these imprints and there has no doubt been much pain amongst existing and prospective Caribbean authors. One must guess that for an increasingly conglomerate metropolitan publishing industry, driven by the accountant's 'bottom-line', these series were insufficiently profitable. Whilst *Faber* has recently launched its new Caribbean series with some fanfare in the region, one notes that the first titles consist of reprints and translations.

The brutal fact is that there has been virtually no change in the situation which existed at the time of independence when the vast majority of the region's most significant writers, with a few exceptions, migrated to Britain, Canada and the USA and were published in those countries. That pattern still persists today, though the region's writers are more likely

* Peepal Tree Press, 17 King's Avenue, Leeds LS6 1QS, UK.
Tel (44) 113 245 1703. Fax (44) 113 245 9616.
E-mail hannah@peepal.demon.co.uk

The Peepal Tree Press catalogue is available by e-mail. There are six lists available:
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- New Poetry (1997 and 1998/9 titles)
- New Literary, Cultural and Historical Studies Backlist Fiction
- Backlist Poetry
- Backlist Literary, Cultural and Historical Studies

to be found in positions at North American universities rather than scratching a living in London. It is true that *Derek Walcott* has long spent part of his year in the Caribbean, but this has almost certainly been facilitated by his academic position in the USA and the success of his books in the metropolitan markets. By contrast, one of the region's other major poets, *Martin Carter*, who died in 1997, hardly ever left his native Guyana and though Carter is revered by Caribbean poets, he is virtually unknown outside that circle. Part of that admiration comes from Carter's manifest lack of concern with the fate of his reputation in the metropolitan centres, but that is an unconcern which few other contemporary Caribbean writers would honestly claim to share.

If the pattern of settlement of Caribbean writers outside the region has not changed, other factors have, which make the possibility of the development of either genuine national literatures or a regionally-focused Caribbean literature even more problematic. One of the constant notes in the criticism of the Caribbean fiction of the 1960s and 1970s was concern over the seductive power of nostalgia in the writing and the loss of sharpness as memories dimmed. It is still true that a good deal of Caribbean fiction is set in a period earlier than its date of publication. Critics also pointed to the danger that works published in the metropolitan centres would be increasingly written to please metropolitan audiences and there is, indeed, plenty of evidence that many novels of that period were edited with a non-Caribbean readership in mind.

Since then, in Britain at least, we have seen the emergence of Black British writing which has little connection with the Caribbean. This is both inevitable and desirable. It is true that there are writers of Caribbean origin in the UK and North America who still write about their native region, but this is frequently either a historical Caribbean, or a 'virtual' Caribbean – a place of imaginative construction. If writers such as *Caryl Phillips*, *David Dabydeen* or



Banner in Trinidad congratulating Nobel laureate, Derek Walcott

Fred D'Aguiar (all of whom came to the UK as children) still set some of their books in the region, one cannot duck the fact that these are, in all essentials, British authors whose concerns grow out of British experience and whose readership is predominantly British. What characterises recent work by North America-based Caribbean writers such as *Anthony Kellman*, *Geoffrey Philp*, *Kwame Dawes* and *Sasenarine Persaud*, all of whom began writing in the Caribbean and migrated when they were well into their adult lives, is an increasing engagement with the landscapes of Florida, South Carolina and Toronto as well as a sense of the increasingly 'long gap' between American presents and Caribbean pasts.

Consequently, what is missing from Caribbean writing (in other than a handful of recent titles), and is absent from the reading experience of people in the Caribbean, are books which focus on contemporary social experience. It cannot be healthy for societies to lack inward fictive reflections of their changing natures. This situation is not simply the outcome of the migration of writers, the existence of a Caribbean 'diaspora' which increasingly has its own concerns, and the absence, with the exceptions noted above, of a Caribbean-based publishing industry. It has also to do with the continuing disjunction between the focus and aesthetics of literary production and the concerns and culture of the broad mass of the Caribbean people. In his forthcoming study, *Natural Mysticism: Towards a New Reggae Aesthetic in Caribbean Writing* (Peepal Tree, 1999), Kwame Dawes makes the point that while much earlier Caribbean writing had an overtly nationalist, anti-colonial agenda, its aesthetic was still colonial. Inevitably, most writers were of the educated middle class, and though their fictions introduced the voices of the ma-

jority working class in dialogue, the language of narration and consciousness remained Standard English. Dawes argues that imaginative writing has the capacity to overcome this disjunction, particularly if it grasps, as

writers such as *Kamau Brathwaite*, *Lorna Goodison*, *Jean Breeze* and Dawes himself have done, that in reggae, there is the example of a cultural product whose aesthetic, means of production and primary focus of consumption have been wholly Caribbean, while at the same time capable of speaking to an international audience. One must note, though, that though *Jean Breeze* has recently returned to Jamaica, all the other writers mentioned are currently located in the USA.

The experience of my own publishing company, *Peepal Tree Press*, points to some further problematics for Caribbean publishing. *Peepal Tree* has survived for 12 years and in that period, published more than 120 titles. This includes the work of established writers, a high proportion of new writers, and significant recuperations from the past, such as the 'Collected Poems' of *Eric Roach*. My initial goal was that, though *Peepal Tree* was based in Leeds, England for economic and family reasons, it would try as much as possible to operate as if it were a Caribbean publishing house. It began with the realistic awareness that if the big publishers, such as *Heinemann* and *Longman*, were increasingly 'down-sizing' their Caribbean operations, (as they already were in the late 1980s) this was almost certainly because the potential market was not large. However, we thought that if sales could be aggregated across the Caribbean, Britain and North America, it would be possible for a small publishing house to survive. I had what was no doubt an arrogant belief that *Peepal Tree* could make a contribution to the emergence of a new generation of Caribbean writers and to producing books which reflected current Caribbean realities for Caribbean readerships. We tried to edit our books from the perspective that they were written by Caribbean authors primarily for the region's

readership. Thus, we took on titles such as *Rooplall Monar's* 'Backdam People', (1986) which was written in the Hindi-influenced Guyanese creole of the Indo-Guyanese sugar workers who were its subject – which we knew would make major demands on readers outside Guyana.

In reality, in terms of the revenues that enable survival, the Caribbean, which ought to be our primary market, is the least significant. Practical problems have included distance, the break-down of relationships over delays in payment and, in one case, the bankruptcy of a bookshop and the emigration of its owner resulting in heavy losses. But what has become increasingly clear is that, with the possible exception of university English departments, books do not travel across the region. Our Jamaican books hardly sell in Guyana or Trinidad, our Guyanese books hardly sell in Jamaica. Second, we discovered just how small the sizes of the literary readerships in each territory really are, outside the school textbook market.

The situation of Guyana offers an exemplary case study. This country's authors include 1950s pioneers such as *A.J. Seymour* and *Edgar Mittelholzer*, subsequent writers such as *Jan Carew*, *Martin Carter*, *Wilson Harris*, *Slade Hopkinson*, *Peter Kempadoo* and *Denis Williams*, and contemporary authors such as *John Agard*, *Brian Chan*, *Cyril Dabydeen*, *David Dabydeen*, *Mahadai Das*, *Fred D'Aguiar*, *Beryl Gilroy*, *Roy Heath*, *Harischandra Khemraj*, *Ian McDonald*, *Mark McWatt*, *Marc Matthews*, *Pauline Melville*, *Rooplall Monar*, *Sasenerine Persaud*, *Nirmala Shewcharan* and *Jan Shinebourne*. Of the contemporaries, only *Mahadai Das* and *Monar* still live in Guyana.

Within the region, Guyana has unquestionably had the most culturally conscious of Caribbean governments. In the 1970s, the government was the prime mover behind the regional *Carifestas* and, in 1988, it was the first administration in the region to institute national literary prizes (and at genuinely generous levels). The recent launch of a Peepal Tree title was graced by the presence of the President, the opposition lea-

der and the head of the army. However, because of the virtual collapse of the Guyanese economy and the social infrastructure in the 1980s, and the continuing painful burden of indebtedness which constrain efforts to rebuild, the literature business does not really extend beyond a very small elite in Georgetown (numbered in hundreds). There have been attempts to establish publishing companies, but while two journals, the literary magazine *Kyk-over-Al* and the more general *Guyana Review*, maintain regular publication, *Demerara Publishers* collapsed after bringing out three books and *Roraima Press* published a couple of titles a few years ago, and nothing since. As a consequence, Guyanese writers have to rely on mainstream British publishers or on Peepal Tree Press. The only alternative is self-production, which frequently means interesting books by authors of genuine talent suffering from poor quality print and binding, and more seriously, the lack of access to professional editing.

The slow revival of the economy during the 1990s has led to the re-establishment of bookshops in Georgetown. At least four of these provide good service, but they battle against the fact that for the vast majority of Guyanese, books are too expensive. In the public sector in 1994, a typist's wage was set at \$4000G (€30) a month, while the minimum household income to support a family above the poverty line was estimated at just over \$10,000G (€75). At that time, even though we reduced the price of Peepal Tree books in Guyana by over one third of their UK price, many titles still sold at around \$1000G, or 25% of a typist's monthly income.

Outside Georgetown, few Guyanese have access to bookshops or libraries. The situation in schools is little better despite the heroic efforts of the Education Ministry and NGOs such as the *Guyana Book Foundation* and *Red Thread Women's Press* – who have been battling to reverse a decline in educational standards and physical resources (many teachers emigrated from Guyana during the 1980s). The position, as reported by Red Thread Press in 1994 in that: 'contemporary Guya-

nese writing has not been available in Guyanese schools for at least the past 10 to 15 years.' Working in collaboration with Peepal Tree Press, Red Thread Press calculated that to achieve the minimum necessary, a programme costing \$10.9m (€75,000) was required – to put books in schools, train teachers in their use, and provide follow-up support. Attempts to secure this level of funding failed, and the situation remains unchanged.

For its size, the Caribbean has produced a remarkable number of creative writers. But without a Caribbean-based publishing industry and an expanded reading public, it is difficult to claim that the nations of the English-speaking Caribbean have yet produced national literatures which play a role in reflecting and creating a national psyche and culture – in the way that reggae can be seen to have done in Jamaica. How can this situation be overcome? The answer is clearly very complex, and would need a further article to expand on, but my view is that nothing much is likely to happen if the issue is left to market forces. The experience of public funding of the arts in the UK, Canada and much of Europe is mixed. But there needs to be some kind of public body to help sustain fragile publishing ventures, support the work of libraries in building a reading public, put writers into the schools (to convince children of the relevance of imaginative writing to their lives and to understanding their societies) and sustain links between the literature departments of the universities and the worlds beyond the campus. Without this, it is hard to believe that much will change.

J.P.

Florent Couao-Zotti

'Our people want to read'

Born in Benin and living in Cotonou where he teaches literature in secondary schools, Florent Couao-Zotti was, until recently, writing plays (*Ce soleil où j'ai toujours soif*, Harmattan) and short stories. With the publication last year of *Notre pain de chaque nuit* (*Le Serpent à Plumes*), a tense and fragile love story about the relationship between a prostitute and a boxer, he is now also establishing himself as a novelist. In addition, he has written a children's book (*Un enfant dans la guerre*) which won the ACTC award (Agency for Cultural and Technical Cooperation), giving him the opportunity to have his work published jointly by the ACTC and Haho, a Togolese publishing house. We asked him how promotion of his books was going.



Adine Sagaly/Opale

– It's fairly low-key with Harmattan. Their directory of authors gets longer every day and they just don't have enough energy to concentrate on several authors at a time. In that respect, I am no different to any other writer, African or otherwise. I get the impression that it is up to us authors to organise our own publicity and, if a writer does nothing to promote his work, then it's too bad for him. It is a completely different story with the novel published by *Le Serpent à Plumes*. This is a medium-sized publishing company which makes great efforts to promote its authors. For example, when my novel was published, I was invited to France and did the rounds of the Fnac shops, both in Paris and outside the capital. At each venue, arrangements were made for me to meet the press, public and booksellers. Talks and conferences were scheduled. It was all very well-organised. The tour lasted a week, which gave me the opportunity to make new friends and contacts. We were fortunate in having an extremely dynamic press officer.

■ *Your work is published in France. Did you also send your first manuscript (the play) to any African publishing houses?*

– No. I knew that Harmattan had a theatre collection whereas, with the possible exception of *Actes Sud*, African publishers do not, generally speaking, publish theatre works. What is more, I knew that a large part of the Harmattan collection was devoted to African writers.

You have to remember that in Africa, writers encounter problems in getting published simply because the publishing companies that do exist do not usually have a reading panel and the works they do bring out are not of the highest quality. I went for Harmattan because they cover the French-speaking world and, therefore, would offer me a far greater chance of getting myself known within that community.

– Yes, the Parisian publishing houses have sent copies to Africa – that is how it usually works. The bookshop in Benin, or wherever, is then responsible for promoting the author in that particular country and is sent copies of the book so that it can do just that.

■ *Buying these books must be rather difficult, if only in terms of cost?*

– Oh yes, there are huge problems because the books sell for the same price as in Europe – even more sometimes, to cover shipping costs. It's not easy explaining these high prices to our fellow countrymen and we often have people asking: 'why not get published in your own country?'. My latest book, for example, sells here for 13,000 CFAF (€20), which is beyond the reach of most people who want to read it. People go to the bookshops to ask about my latest work, but when they hear the price, they leave without buying, saying they might come back. For many people, it is only on the rare occasion of an unexpected windfall that they can actually allow themselves the luxury of such a purchase.

When publishers send books to Africa, they won't be in large amounts because sales are so low. I sold only 50 copies of my novel in Benin! This is absurdly low when you compare it to the number that were sold in France.

All the same, people in Benin really do want to read books, there is no doubt about that. Especially those produced here. If we carry on using the excuse that books published in France cannot be sold in this country, I think we will end up going round in circles. So we just have to find new ways of presenting these books to the public. We have to adopt a new perspective, create a new arena where both Western and African publishers can work together and pool their experiences. We, as African writers, could profit from this approach.

■ *Can people buy your books in Benin, and in Africa?*

■ *Is joint publication the answer then?*

– Such a solution would be of great interest to us. Experiments are currently taking place in Côte d'Ivoire, for example, where a number of publishing houses are collaborating with French publishers. But here in Benin we have not got to that stage yet. Some first steps have been made, but there is nothing definite as yet.

■ *It is said that it is much easier to get books published in English-speaking parts of Africa than in French-speaking regions. Is this true?*

– The dynamics of the business are completely different. It is easier because English speakers are not bothered by aesthetics in the same way that Latin people are. In neighbouring Nigeria, a few scraps of recycled paper will do to write a book. What is important to them is not stylish presentation but simply the opportunity of communicating their ideas and popularising their work. We French-speakers should take a leaf out of their book, so to speak. And in fact, what I think will happen is that we will move closer towards this type of publishing.

In fact, there is already some evidence of this happening. In Benin, we see an increasing number of studies being done on our society and development. But they are not being published because publication of this kind of text, which is often rather didactic and academic, is very difficult. Increasingly, however, the authors are endeavouring to adopt a more practical approach, imitating their English-speaking counterparts. They no longer mind compiling their work in booklet form and publishing it just as it is, thereby completely bypassing the problem of professional publication. In Nigeria, everyone makes their dissertations and theses available in this way. Such a solution also means that the reader is able to get hold of the work quickly and easily, and at a much lower price. The only problem is that, because the work is not in book form, people tend to believe it has little value. They think that, unless it has been thoroughly scrutinised by a reading panel, it must be of poorer quality.

■ *There are some quite rigid views about why it is so difficult for an author to get published in Africa – for example the conflict between the oral and written traditions?*

– Of course, but these are just clichés. It is true that ours is a civilisation based on the oral tradition. But I can assure you that we joined the modern age some time ago! Literacy rates are increasing in Africa. What I am saying is that at the time Senghor and others like him were writing, the African readership was not very large. Since then, the numbers have increased 15 or 20-fold. All the same, their works did capture the spirit of the times. Nowadays, we have a far broader readership and I believe that this is the direction in which research should be focused.

What we also need here in Africa are some real celebrities, some star names so that things can get going under their own steam. Gifted writers, those who can draw the crowds, should be making screen appearances. They should be promoted and publicised in magazines so that large book fairs can be held nationwide and so that people will want to come and satisfy their curiosity. Things are beginning to happen. Benin has long been seen as the 'Latin quarter' of Africa, having its fair share of intellectuals but no authors of great repute. Bit by bit, though, things are starting to change. More and more authors are having their works published, both locally

and overseas. Fairs are being advertised here and there, and more round-table talks and presentations are being organised. This is the only way to arouse the curiosity of the general public. At the moment, it is only students, specialists and those involved in the publishing industry who have any real interest in books.

■ *The first Congress of African Writers was held last August, on the theme of the role of the writer in African society. You said there: 'We are neither journalists nor members of NGOs. We are writers, no more, no less'. Were you suggesting that the image of the African intellectual as the thorn in the flesh of society was now extinct?*

– No, I don't think so. It seems to me that, all too often, the writer is confused with the intellectual. I do not think we are intellectuals in the true sense of the word because it takes more than just writing books to become one. An intellectual is someone who has original ideas on how our society works, someone with something to say about the development of our society. It is because of this that the image of the intellectual is so often confused with that of the writer. It is when a writer puts his pen down and tries to assert his convictions that he becomes an intellectual.

These days, there seems to be a certain resignation on the part of intellectuals – and among the latter I include everyone from historians to biologists. Yet there are many flaws in our societies and it is precisely there that the role of the intellectual becomes so important. It is vital that they stick their necks out and denounce the dysfunctional aspects of society and tell their fellow countrymen what is happening. But they must also be careful not to take sides. During a democratic revival, at a time when both right-wing and left-wing parties are being created, when they do speak out, intellectuals are generally accused of supporting one or other political group or alliance. They must endeavour not necessarily to remain politically correct but to tell things as they really are. Theirs is a far from an easy role to play.

■ *As far as you are concerned, does the fact that your work is published in France give you a specific role – for example in portraying an image of Africa other than that all too often conveyed?*

– No, I don't think so. When a writer chooses to be published in France, he does so because he thinks the product he wishes to make available to people will perhaps be better publicised there on account of the greater resources available to French publishing houses. That is all. Our aims are exactly the same: to communicate the concerns of the writer and quite simply to hold up to our fellow countrymen the mirror of their society. And if that interests the European public, then it is a bonus for us.

■ *But your preferred readership is, first and foremost, an African one?*

– Yes, of course. When a writer creates a work, it is himself that he examines before all else – because he is preoccupied with certain questions that apply to his society and because he would like those people within his immediate surroundings to share his concerns. And if it so happens that these concerns are appreciated everywhere, then that is bound to be a source of satisfaction to him. A work, any work, is above all a self-indulgent and self-centred creation. ■

Interview by T.G.

Literature in the Pacific Islands

'Tending our tiny garden'

by Linda Crowl*

Pacific Islands literature has four markets. The *international* one has six billion people. The main international language of the region is English, which also has a huge number of speakers worldwide. There are a significant number of French speaking territories, as well as one where Spanish is used (see box). Although in the Pacific, the production of literature in these three official UN languages is small, the market potential is great.

The *regional* market has 14 million people but there no single unifying tongue. Pidgin is found in more than one country – Papua New Guinea (*Tok Pisin*), Solomon Islands (*Pijin*) and Vanuatu (*Bislama*) but the dialects vary greatly. And while Bislama enjoys the status of a national language in Vanuatu, Pijin does not command much pride among Solomon Islanders. The international market for Pidgin readers is practically non-existent.

National markets are limited, with populations ranging from about 2000 (Tokelau and Niue) to four million (New Zealand and Papua New Guinea). National languages spoken in the Pacific include Samoan, Tongan, Cook Islands Maori, Niuean, and Tokelauan. Because significant numbers of people from these ethnicities live in New Zealand, Australia and USA, there is, in fact, an 'international' market, but it is very small. Only a tiny percentage of Maori from Aotearoa/New Zealand actually read Maori.

Local markets can be infinitesimal (Pitcairn has just 50 peo-

ple) in a region which has no fewer than 1200 local languages. Bahasa Indonesian is read in Irian Jaya (about half of its two million people are native Melanesian), but the government suppression of the native population means that production and reading of the local literature is seriously curtailed.

For various reasons, potential audiences do not match up to the number of potential writers and publishers of Pacific Island literature. The low population figures already mentioned, and literacy rates are two factors. In addition, Pacific Island countries, excluding Hawai'i and New Zealand, have some of the lowest *per capita* incomes in the world. Transport and communication problems over the vast ocean also drive up the cost of books. If not impossible altogether, buying books (other than those prescribed for school) rates low on the priority list.

Against this background of multiple languages, dire financial

Notice in Port Moresby, PNG.
Pidgin is used in three Pacific island countries but the dialects vary greatly

The Courier



straits and very different markets, literature is, amazingly enough, still produced. The workhorses of the industry are, not surprisingly, those with the biggest stake, namely the writers and publishers.

Writers

Pacific Island languages did not exist in written form prior to the arrival of European missionaries. The various churches have long had a central role in providing printed material in the region's local tongues, with an emphasis on Bible translations, hymnbooks, tracts, grammars and spelling books. Although governments have assumed responsibility for education, most languages are still being developed and indeed, there are some which do not yet have their own dictionary. Most publications in vernacular languages are still either religious or educational, with much of the latter focusing

International languages in the Pacific

English is read in:

American Samoa
Cook Islands
Federated States of Micronesia
Fiji
Guam
Hawai'i
Kiribati
Marshall Islands
Nauru
New Zealand
Niue
Norfolk
Northern Mariana Islands
Palau
Papua New Guinea
Pitcairn
Samoa
Solomon Islands
Tokelau
Tonga
Torres Strait Islands
Tuvalu
about half of Vanuatu

French is read in:

French Polynesia
New Caledonia
Wallis and Futuna
about half of Vanuatu

Spanish is read in:

Easter Island (Rapanui)

* Abridged version of a text supplied by the author who is Publications Fellow at the Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, and a PhD student at the University of Wollongong.

on legends and children's stories. There are few poems, short stories, plays or novels. Within some language groups, there are arguments about orthography. For example, the Samoans are unable to agree on the use of glottal stops. This kind of pedantic disagreement is inevitable, but countries waste limited resources by arguing – and writers are not published.

Pacific Islanders often find it easier to write in the metropolitan language that they were schooled in. For many, especially those living abroad, the mother tongue is just for oral communication. Questioned at the 1998 Frankfurt Book Fair about his choice of English, Samoan writer *Albert Wendt* said English was *his* language. Pacific Islanders have also told me that they can explain things more succinctly in English.

Metropolitan languages also have much bigger audiences. Let us face it: most writers dream about hitting the big time, having a global audience, winning the Booker Prize. An author cannot do this writing in Hiri Motu. And publishing abroad often brings recognition at home. When a person becomes famous overseas, people on the islands come round to 'admitting', and even sharing in the public acclamation of the talents of one of their own.

The larger, overseas audiences are often less controversial. Politics in small societies can be vituperative and this may prevent the growth of literature. It is difficult to be objective in tiny communities. Whichever group is in power is likely to work with

people that it trusts, or that further the aims of the government or of particular people within it. Those involved are sometimes conscious of their favouritism, sometimes not. This situation can affect the availability of funds for writing, publishing, distribution, and even libraries. Religion can also introduce an element of divisiveness. A Papua New Guinean librarian told me that his country had 800 cultures... until the missionaries came and created double that number! Divisions caused by churches can inhibit as well as promote the development of language and literature. Witness the different orthographies propounded by Kiribati's Protestant and Catholic churches.

Societal pressures can hinder or even prevent book publication. At the 1998 Frankfurt Book Fair, a Samoan informed me that he and other 'real' Samoans didn't like 'overseas' Samoans publishing 'lies' about their society. He was apparently referring to *Albert Wendt*, the most famous Pacific Island fiction writer, and *Sia Figiel*, well on her way to being as famous, who had just given an interview before an international literary crowd. *Wendt* lives in Auckland, and *Figiel* told me she wants to live in Fiji because Samoan society is too 'conservative'. *Wendt* and *Figiel* write what they regard as 'truths' about Samoan society, but using the medium of fiction, which is marginally safer. But there are clearly some Samoans who do not want any flaws in their society displayed before an international public. If it were left to such 'traditionalists,' the works

of *Wendt* and *Figiel* would not be published. For creative writers, the choice is often to have their work published abroad – or not at all.

Despite all the difficulties, writers have emerged: *Keith Lujan Camacho* (Guam), *Alastair Campbell* (Cook Islands), *Patricia Grace* (Aotearoa/New Zealand), *Vilsoni Hereniko* (Rotuma), *Julian Maka'a* (Solomon Islands), *Grace Mera Molisa* (Vanuatu), *Tekarei Russel* (Kiribati), *Russell Soaba* (Papua New Guinea), *Subramani* (Fiji), *Marie-Claude Teissier-Landgraf* (French Polynesia), *Konai Helu Thaman* (Tonga). These are just a few of the authors who have had their work published regionally and internationally. And some have had their work translated into other languages (as many as 20 in the case of *Albert Wendt*). Others have succeeded in getting into print in national or local periodicals.

Although the numbers are growing, the Pacific Islands do not have authors who can survive just by writing. They are also teachers, professors, civil servants and shop owners. Similarly, book publishers do more than just publish. They also do consultancy and office work and run newspapers. And they are likely to be subsidised by churches, governments or aid agencies.

Publishers

Pacific Island writers, with their unique cultures and writing histories, are talented and have much to offer, but they need support. Often the creative genius that makes a writer, does not make a typesetter, publicist or distributor – yet all of these are necessary for writers to gain recognition. Educational access and standards vary across the islands. With education comes exposure to writing and publishing. *Simms* (1991:11) points out that, in developed countries, 'the apparatus of publishing and printing' is geared up to meet the expectations of readers as well as writers. Many Pacific Islands have neither the human resources nor the infrastructure necessary to turn what writers write into something that readers expect.

As mentioned above, the number of Pacific Islanders is small relative to the global population. Even if we add tourists who take a casual interest in the region, and

Contact addresses for those interested in Pacific Islands literature

Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, PO Box 1168, Suva, Fiji, tel. (679) 212 018, fax (679) 301 594, ips@usp.ac.fj
Contact the **South Pacific Creative Arts Society** c/o IPS.

University of Papua New Guinea Press, PO Box 320, University PO, NCD, Papua New Guinea, tel. (675) 326 0130, fax (675) 326 0127

Books Pasifika, PO Box 68/446, Auckland 1, New Zealand, phone (64 9) 303 2349, fax (64 9) 377-9258, press@pasifika.co.nz

Peter Moore, Bookseller, PO Box 66, Cambridge CB1 3PD, UK, tel. (44 1223) 411 177, fax (44 1223) 240 559

Pacific Book House, 17 Park Avenue, Broadbeach Waters QLD 4218, Australia, tel. (61 75) 5390 446, fax (61 75) 5384 114

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scholars who keep abreast of literature for their careers, the natural audience for Pacific Island literature is tiny. So the business depends not just on production, but also on market creation. This entails advertising, campaigns to 'sell' personalities, and working with typesetters, cover designers and printers to improve and maintain standards (some people are attracted to authors through their book covers). It also involves gaining press coverage and doing market research to learn what people will buy.

Publishing ventures in the Pacific come and go. Enthusiasm for something different can provide the impetus to carry a new scheme through its initial phases but keeping it going over the long haul is another story. Publishing is hard work that requires attention to detail and stamina in 30-degree heat. Few people have a background in editing, production and budgeting. Most people lack sales skills because 'bragging' is culturally inappropriate. In addition, the

general work ethic in the Pacific Islands is not geared to the relentless pace of publishing. Burn-out is common, as those who are competent carry burdens made heavier by those who are less keen on working. Finally, finance is an important factor. If the funding from institutions or aid donors dries up, publishing programmes are likely to fold. This is not to say that having wads of money guarantees a successful publishing venture.

Despite these difficulties, a number of publishers have been able to keep going, using a combination of institutional support, aid sponsorship, a sense of mission and a balance of labour (in some cases, volunteered). Many of the writers mentioned above have had their work fostered by the University of Papua New Guinea, the South Pacific Creative Arts Society or the Institute of Pacific Studies (USP) with the help of highly committed individuals working in these institutions.

The future

Distinctions blur. Those seemingly with the most at stake – the writers and publishers – are part of an interactive circle. Literature not only reflects culture, but also perpetuates it. To appeal to an audience, fiction evokes empathy and interest, strikes chords of personal experience and makes people think in new ways. The audience is just as necessary as the writers and publishers. They create and sustain each other. As mentioned above, a sense of mission, a sense of creating and sustaining culture, is important in supporting literature. So the future of Pacific Islands writing depends on personalities. It also depends on having people who want to read and people who are willing to create the region's literature. For such a small population base, the islands have been lucky to see their works in translation. And as the demand for 'ethnic literature' expands, they have an opportunity to get on this bandwagon.

In the post-Cold War era, as Europe and North America address other concerns, the Pacific Islands are ever more heavily influenced by Asia. This is likely to affect cultural and social expectations with more decisions about literature and markets moving into the Asian sphere. However, although extra funding and educational resources are likely to come from this source, for the foreseeable future, most writing and publishing will probably continue in English – both because it is an easier language and because it has a bigger audience than Japanese or Chinese.

The creation of a Pacific Islands literature is a struggle, and will continue to be so. Usually, it will only be niche markets – which might be depressing for those who believe, in a global framework, that 'more is better.' But for those of us writers, publishers and readers who strive to create and sustain literature, tending our tiny, but very different garden is a challenge and a pleasure. And the international market is growing all the time. ■ L.C.

In memory of Matoub Lounès, Kabyle poet and singer, who was murdered in Algeria on 25 June 1998.

Against the tyranny of uniformity

by Christian Salmon*

The International Parliament of Writers, which was recently established in Brussels, strives to ensure that all those persecuted by authority can make themselves heard.

The International Parliament of Writers is a parliament without power. The only territory we are authorised to represent is described in the charter prepared by *Salman Rushdie* as follows: 'writers are citizens of many countries; the finite and frontiered country of observable reality in everyday life, the boundless kingdom of the imagination, the half-lost land of memory, the federations of the heart which are both hot and cold, the united states of the mind (calm and turbulent, broad and narrow, ordered and deranged), the celestial and infernal nations of desire, and – perhaps the most important of all our habitations – the unfettered republic of the tongue'.

Our MPs have no qualification other than the fact that they have been driven from their countries, which means that they have been elected, not by voters who have faith in them, but by censors who refuse to tolerate their writing.

It is, therefore, a strange kind of parliament, whose first two presidents, *Salman Rushdie* and *Wole Soyinka* are being tracked down by murderers from two member states of the UN and are denied the basic rights granted to ordinary citizens.

This parliament of adversity was founded in haste in the bleak summer of 1993 immediately after the murder of *Tahar Djaout* in

Algeria. We were simply responding to an unprecedented situation in the history of literature. During the first half of 1993, the number of the world's writers suffering persecution or imprisonment, or who had been murdered, reached a record level of over 1000. Whether they be Algerian, Iranian, Egyptian, Turkish, Nigerian or Chinese, many writers today are confronted with the cruel dilemma that *Tahar Djaout* barely had the time to confront before he was executed: if you speak out, you die. If you remain silent, you die. So speak out and die...

During the three years that the Parliament of Writers has existed, many of its members, including the Chinese poet *Bei Dao* and the Congolese novelist *Sony Labou Tansi*, have been arrested. Our President has twice been prevented from attending meetings and finally had to cross the border in secret. Others, like *Yachar Kemal* and the Iranian *Faradj Sarkouhi*, have been hauled before the courts. The Egyptian Nobel prize winner *Naguib Mahfouz* was stabbed out in the street. And then there was the terrible hanging of *Ken Saro Wiwa*, executed by the Nigerian dictatorship. Murders of writers have become almost commonplace.

Censorship has undergone a change over the past 10 years. Since the fall of the Berlin Wall, the model of central censorship, imposed by totalitarian states in order to suppress dissident thinking and nonconformist art, has undergone a metamorphosis and has assumed new forms. Censorship now has different agents and targets. It has been 'privatised', effectively separating itself from the state, and has permeated society by becoming a state of mind. Now it does not just attack books, but also directly their authors. And above all, it no longer merely targets public, religious or ideological opinions, but also the very space in which they are expressed and the free interplay of words and forms.

In Algeria, during the assassination campaign against intellectuals, merely being thought to be a

The International Parliament of Writers

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Harold Pinter

José Saramago

Anton Shammas

Pep Subiros

Antonio Tabucchi

Adriaan Van Dis

writer was sufficient for inclusion in the blacklist of the Islamic death squads. This was irrespective of what one wrote and sometimes applied to people who had never published anything, and publishing houses that were no longer active. In Iran, all aspects of music, including its broadcast, performance and teaching, were banned for a long time. And in Afghanistan, on bonfires that reached television screens across the world, we saw the Taliban burn reels of film after they entered Kabul. They did not even take the trouble to look at what the films contained.

Such intolerance is gaining ground – and not just in regions under the sway of Islamic fundamentalism. You also find it in Europe and the United States, where a new moral order is trying to impose its own rationale, criteria and limits on

*Secretary General of the International Parliament of Writers.
120 Rue de l'Hôtel des Monnaies, 1060 Bruxelles
Tel. 32 2 539 10 47. Fax 32 2 534 45 59.
e-mail: int_parliament_of_writers@compuserve.com

writers and artists. In local authority areas and regions controlled by the National Front in France, there is cause for concern, not just because the distribution of certain books is hindered, but because of the underlying aim of cultural policies that are contaminated by racist and xenophobic ideology. In the United States, the works of authors such as *Steinbeck* and *Richard Wright* are forbidden in some high schools as a result of pressure from family organisations. All the protections and barriers that have been sustained since the Enlightenment to leave room for creative activity are being eliminated.

At a time when such violence is occurring, and is even being intensified and becoming commonplace, the international community of writers and artists can no longer merely confine itself to statements of principle and protest. Writers, artists and other intellectuals are the only ones who can organise resistance, and they must do so without delay, by declaring that there can be no democracy without solidarity, no civilisation without hospitality – and that culture cannot develop in a closed society.

That is why the International Parliament of Writers has worked since its inception to set up a *Network of Cities of Asylum* capable of offering refuge to persecuted writers and artists. These are to be free zones where creative activity is not just tolerated, but actually encouraged, and where writers can continue with their work despite the efforts of those who wish to murder them. They are to form an ark or archipelago of the imagination. Since the Middle Ages, cities have often revealed themselves to be more free-thinking than states, welcoming those in exile and protecting the oppressed. As we in Brussels are well aware, during the 20th century, surrealism, cubism and all the great enterprises of modernity established a link between the city and the cosmos (between *urbs* and *orbs*). They were essentially urban enterprises born out of the hospitality of the host cities. Increasing the number of asylum cities will reestablish the freedom of the city for creative people who have been gagged, break their isolation by creating new structures of solidarity around them, and ensure the defence not just of individuals but also of their work by encouraging reading, translation and dissemination.

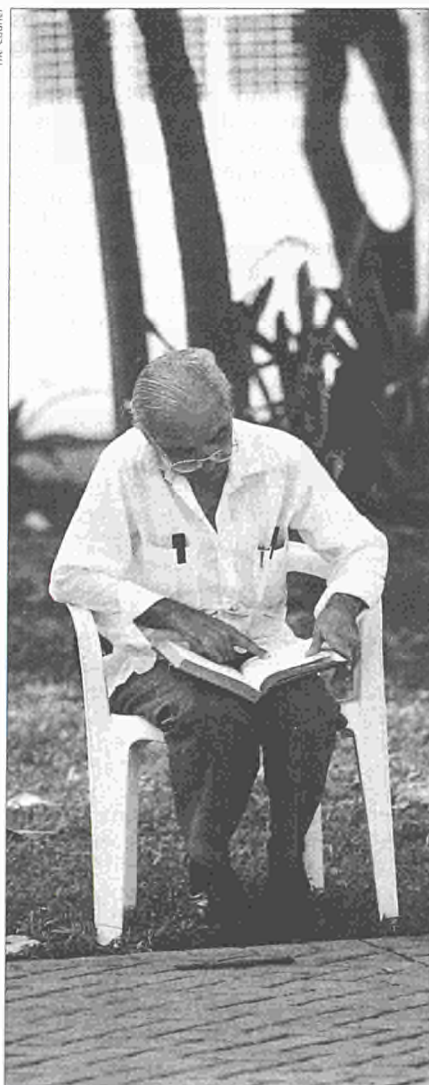
Over 20 cities have already signed up to our charter. They include Amsterdam, Barcelona, Berlin, Bern, Caen, Frankfurt, Gijón, Gothenburg, Graz, Lausanne, Porto,

Salzburg, Stavanger, Strasburg and Venice and the network is now spreading to Latin America (Mexico and Brazil in particular), where about 10 safe houses are currently being organised. In two years, the International Parliament of Writers has been able to offer over 30 safe houses to authors from Algeria, Cuba, Iran, Nigeria, Uzbekistan, Vietnam and other countries.

The International Parliament of Writers is now establishing itself in Brussels, Europe's political and economic capital, not just to make a vague cultural contribution to the European project, but in a genuine attempt to create a true policy for literature. The European project is an act of will in which institutions strive to harmonise standards, while the policy for literature will actually draw strength from diversity. It will not be the result of decrees or compromises, as it requires an intense awareness of 'otherness'. At a time of globalisation and standardisation of policies and economies, the International Parliament of Writers intends to emphasise diversity through a specific and pragmatic

Concern that culture is becoming 'homogenised'

The Courier



policy that is intended to create space for dialogue and confrontation, is geared towards the minority rather than the majority and aims to establish contact between those who speak and write and those who have been silenced. We are very much aware that public statements by intellectuals are regarded with suspicion. The 20th century has both provided a stage for this kind of posturing and has become the grave of a certain type of commitment. Yesterday's political activation has become today's media manipulation, and we would be foolish to believe that we are completely immune to its snares: collective action by writers and artists is still necessary today because the freedom to write and create is not merely an indulgence granted to writers and artists, but the very lifeblood of democracy. The way that society protects its fictional writings, art and creative activity is just as important a measure of the vitality of a democracy as the turnout in elections, the number of parties or simply the freedom of information.

The task of writers, artists and intellectuals today is not so much to lay down the law for others, like the committed intellectuals who defended Dreyfus, but rather to help create new space for freedom, interaction and solidarity. The asylum cities must become crucibles of a new form of citizenship and perhaps even of a new form of international law, as *Jacques Derrida* so clearly explained in his essay about asylum cities, whose title served as our manifesto at our last meeting in March 1997: '*Cosmopolitans of the world, one more effort!*'

For the evil of individual censorship has now been exceeded by the cultural desert that is currently being created. Culture is becoming standardised and homogenised, as a result of the hegemony of multinational media conglomerates and manufacturers of a culture that leaves little place for the expression of diversity by linguistic and cultural minorities. This process must be prevented by increasing the number of points of force, inventing new international links between people who create and people who have been silenced and increasing the number of refuges for creators. These must not be oases or reservations but safe havens and capes of good hope from which the adventure of free thought can once again begin. In the words of *Victor Segalen* and *Edouard Glissant*, '*Diversity is at risk in today's world*'. Our Network of Cities of Asylum was intended to make it possible to reintroduce diversity wherever it is at risk. But one of our most urgent

Cities belonging to the Network of Cities of Asylum

Amsterdam (Netherlands)
 Barcelona (Spain)
 Berlin (Germany)
 Bern (Switzerland)
 Blois (France)
 Caen (France)
 Dornbirn (Vorarlberg Region) (Austria)
 Frankfurt (Germany)
 Gijón (Spain)
 Gothenburg (Sweden)
 Graz (Austria)
 Lausanne (Switzerland)
 Mexico City (Mexico)
 Passo Fundo (Brazil)
 Porto (Portugal)
 Salzburg (Austria)
 Stavanger (Norway)
 Strasbourg (France)
 Vienna (Austria)
 Venice (Italy)

Expected to join soon
 Barbacena (Brazil)
 Brussels (Belgium)
 Curitiba (Brazil)
 Ferney-Voltaire (France)
 Granada (Spain)
 Lleida (Spain)
 Madrid (Spain)
 Málaga (Spain)
 Murcia (Spain)
 Oslo (Norway)
 Porto Alegre (Brazil)
 Sabadell (Spain)
 São Paulo (Brazil)
 Seville (Spain)
 Stockholm (Sweden)
 Trondheim (Norway)

Cities wishing to join the Network of Cities of Asylum should contact the International Parliament of Writers – Maison du Livre, 24/28, rue de Rome, B-1060 Brussels.

tasks is to take on the huge challenge of considering and investigating the ways that cultural life has been transformed, silenced, standardised, flattened and eroded, causing isolation and fragmentation. This is all happening under the triumphant banner of globalisation, which is increasing the number of barriers to the free circulation of creative people and intellectuals while at the same time enabling capital to circulate ever more freely. The members of the parliament are united in their resistance to standardisation and the

forms of dictatorship that are trying to force us to adopt a fixed linguistic or national identity. We are fighting for a complex, plural identity and claim the right to be different and to develop – all of which could give rise to radical new forms of commitment in today's world. Wherever you look, censorship usually takes the form of the tyranny of uniformity and the spectre of identity which is closed in on itself. Today's inquisition persecutes anything that reaches out for something different or is unformulated, unheard of, heterogeneous or diverse, that is to say anything that is struggling to be born.

The International Parliament of Writers was created in an attempt to invent new forms of commitment and to bring an end to the pantomime of pleading, denunciations, tribunals and media indignation, with all its humanitarian rhetoric of the type denounced by Orwell in his *'Politics and the English language'*. Orwell denounces clichés, threadbare metaphors and lazy formulations that are evidence of deterioration of the language and dull the mind, making it ready for the passive acceptance of unconsidered thoughts and feelings. We need, in the words of Gilles Deleuze, who had to leave the parliament because of illness, 'to become cartographers by mapping, rather than blocking routes of escape, building bridges and constructing new relationships between arts and cultures; resuscitating suppressed cultures, disappearing languages...'; but we also need to be archivists in the sense of Foucault, who described an intellectual's working day as 'ceaseless scholarship', by which he meant dealing with contradictory sources, discovering lost documents, breathing life into forgotten histories etc.

If Gilles Deleuze is correct when he writes that one of the functions of fiction is 'to invent a missing people', we represent that people, for whom we have formed a parliament. There are many manifestations of this missing people: like the Kabyle who mourn the murder of Matoub Lounès and are fighting for a pluralist, multilingual Algeria. Other manifestations of missing people include the *Palestinians*, as they continue their long march towards peace, the *Yanomani* in the Amazon basin who are disappearing as the flames that surround them encroach ever more on to their lands. Then there is the large 'nation' of refugees, displaced and stateless people – of all races and nationalities. We could mention the *Ogoni* whose land and environment have been violated by big oil companies working hand-in-glove

with a military dictatorship. Indeed, we could talk about all the peoples of Nigeria, who have now regained hope, after the death of Abacha who sent Ken Saro Wiwa to the gallows.

Our parliament certainly does not regard itself as a new force, or even as a counterforce. On the contrary, it has arisen from something that has no rights or foundation. Its aim is to ensure that 'the inaudible and unheard words of everyone who is being oppressed by authority, the cries of the world' are heard, in the words of Jacques Derrida and Edouard Glissant. The persecution and murder of writers and intellectuals are not merely violations of the individual freedom of opinion or expression. They also aim to crush the hints of another world that are to be found in literature, which provides the tools for the invention of a different form of democracy and also gives it form.

Before the violence began in Yugoslavia, it became very clear that writers were being reduced to silence by the purging of dictionaries and of the Serbo-Croat language, whose hyphen is a symbol of a mixed language that forms a bridge. This was surprising, – but how can we forget Arthur Koestler's warning that wars are conducted for words on a battlefield of meaning. In Algeria, before giving the green light to terrorists and murderers, Berber and French were suppressed to make way for a desiccated form of Arabic. It was a wooden language quite suitable for party bureaucrats and military instructors. This is what Hermann Broche described as the 'enforcement of silence before murder' as long ago as 1934.

Today, literature is suffering a level of violence that is unprecedented in its history. Writers are appealing to us from Algeria, Iran, China, Egypt, Turkey and Nigeria, but not just about literature. Their appeal is a simple one, and the same truth is repeated in all tongues. Writing means communicating with someone and communicating with someone is the opposite of killing him. We must listen to these writers and answer quickly. If we fail to do so, words will be silenced by murder.

C.S.

Europe-ACP

CDI's performance commended by the President of the ACP Council of Ministers

CDI activities are not well known outside of the ACP circle. A senior official representative of the beneficiary countries made a point of expressing his great satisfaction with the effective services rendered by the institution.

The President of the ACP Council of Ministers, the Honourable Prof. George Saitoti, Minister of Planning and National Development, and member of the Parliament of Kenya, in a recent visit to the CDI's headquarters in Brussels, praised the Centre for its 'highly professional and business-like approach to the support provided to the ACP private sector'. Hon. Saitoti expressed satisfaction in his capacity as Council President with the substantial increases in output achieved by the Centre in recent years and the substantial number of ACP enterprises assisted within a limited budgetary framework, which have 'not gone unnoticed'.

Hon. Saitoti stressed that the current negotiations will indeed recognise the important role played by

the CDI, particularly in the context of globalisation and the need for maintaining competitiveness in increasingly difficult market conditions for ACP enterprises. Appropriate provision would need to be made for an expanded mandate and increased resources whilst maintaining a sound management structure which should be willing and able to effectively decentralise CDI's activities by way of 'a partial relocation into each ACP region', according to Honourable Saitoti.

The President of the Council commended the CDI Directorate and staff for yet another year of sound performance.

Hon. Prof. Saitoti, MP, Minister of Planning and National Development of Kenya, current President of the ACP Council of Ministers and Co-President of the ACP-EU Council of Ministers, with the Ambassador of Kenya, Philip Mwazia and the Director of CDI, Surendra Sharma, during his visit to the Centre's Headquarters in Brussels

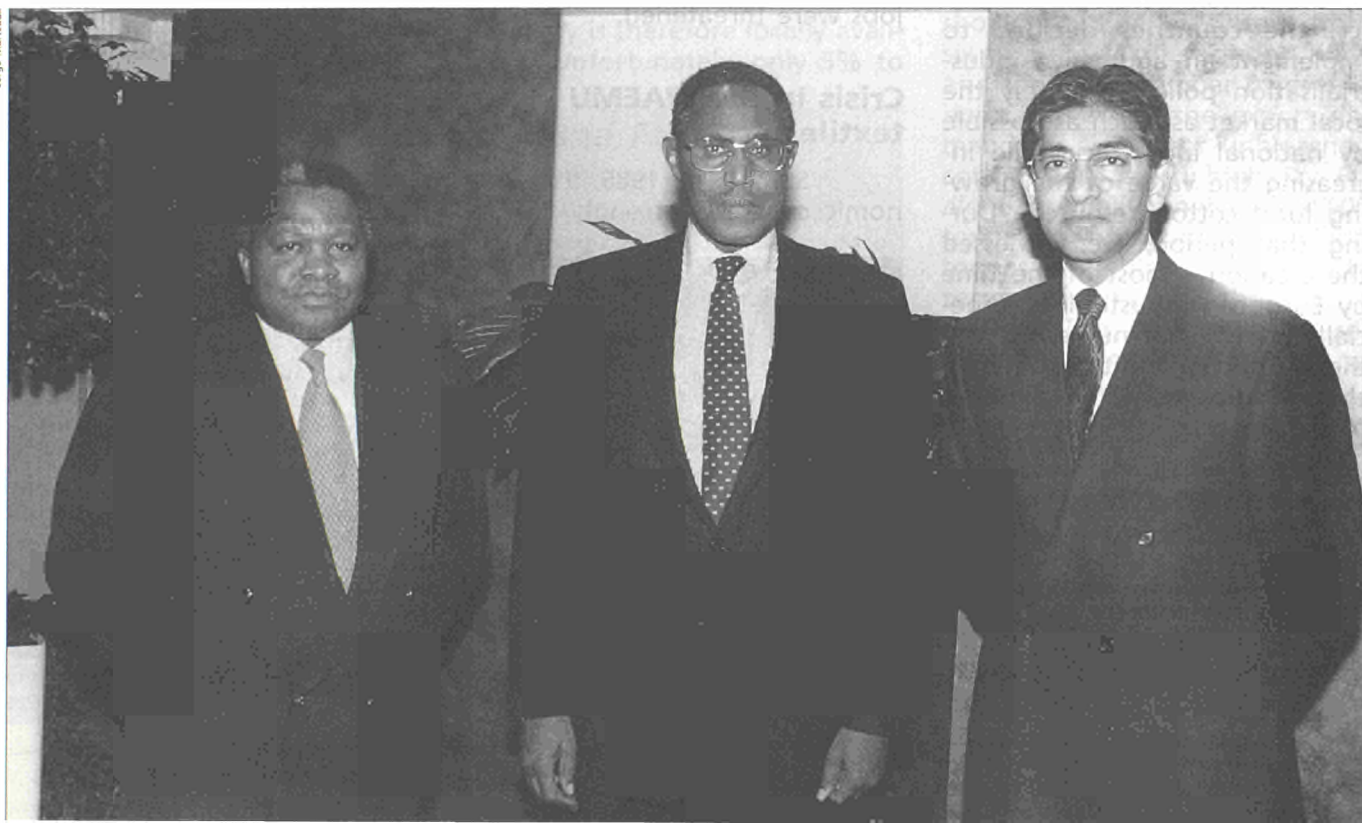


CDI

The Centre for the Development of Industry (CDI) is a joint ACP-EU institution created in the framework of the Lomé Convention linking the European Union with the 71 ACP countries (Africa, Caribbean, Pacific). Its objective is to support the creation, expansion and restructuring of industrial companies in ACP countries. To this effect, the Centre promotes partnerships between ACP and European companies. These partnerships may take various forms: financial, technical and commercial partnerships, management contracts, licensing or franchise agreements, sub-contracting, etc.

Editor:

Mr. Surendra Sharma
Director of the CDI
Avenue Herrmann Debroux, 52
B-1160 Brussels, Belgium
Tel.: +32 2 679 18 11
Fax: +32 2 675 26 03
e-mail: director@cdi.be
Internet Website: www.cdi.be



Dossier

The textile industry in WAEMU countries

Cotton production in the Sahel region is currently little developed, though 95% of production is exported. At present, Europe imports some 500,000 tonnes of cotton, mainly from Turkey, Pakistan and Uzbekistan. Is there not a way of providing new European outlets for Sahelian cotton? The CDI has decided to study the situation and attempt to identify actions capable of generating industrial and/or commercial partnerships.

With its 63.5 million inhabitants, the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) has significant market potential, notably for textile products. Starting in 1950, industrialists began setting up spinning, weaving and dyeing units (ERG in Côte d'Ivoire). Up to 1965, a few textile companies were created to produce for local markets. Between 1965 and 1985, based on the success of the cotton development policy, the countries decided to implement an aggressive industrialisation policy to supply the local market as much as possible by national industries while increasing the value of the growing local cotton resources. During that period, we witnessed the creation – most of the time by European industrialists, especially French – of numerous textile production units as well as the development of existing units.

Excess production, but large profits

Thanks to these investments, each country in the region had its own national textile industry, a situation that led to excess production capacity (ap-

proximately 160 million metres in loincloth fabric alone) with regard to the needs of the local market and, consequently, an increase in competition. Nonetheless, throughout the period, the companies prospered by supplying the local market and even exporting to neighbouring states. The machines operated 'round the clock' and most of the units' production (SOTIBA, SONITEXTIL, UNIWAX, ICODI, etc.) were considered as references for the sub-Saharan clientele. The sales prices enabled the companies to generate satisfactory margins: the plants were selling 1 metre of fancy loincloth fabric for €1.22 to €1.32.

Unfortunately, that period of prosperity was not used to prepare for the future and modernise production equipment. Moreover, in spite of regional agreements to progressively eliminate inter-state customs duties, each state took measures to preserve its national companies' market as soon as a company or jobs were threatened.

Crisis in the WAEMU textile sector

Starting in 1985, the economic crisis was strongly felt in

the sector because of the decrease in local purchasing power and a competition crisis with competitors from other parts of the world. The African textile industry having always been based on the local market, the loss of purchasing power resulted in a decrease in the market for good quality loincloth fabric and, as a consequence, in a strong increase in the market for second-hand clothes as well as for imported loincloth fabric of lesser quality, often of Asian origin.

Consequently, sales volumes and margins decreased, and the financial situation deteriorated. Numerous companies either temporarily stopped production or went out of business altogether. We also witnessed the formation of groups or mergers but, generally speaking, the production levels of finished fabrics dropped considerably. As its costs are too high compared with those of Asia, the local production of unbleached thread and fabric became non-competitive, and the companies began importing such products. Integrated companies (spinning and weaving) reduced the production of unbleached products or stopped producing them altogether.

Seeing their margins drop, with those not actually forced out reducing their activities, the European industrialists – partners in most of the region's

The CDI's deputy director visits the NSTS factory in Senegal



Table 1: Current Production of Cotton Fibre (tonnes/season)

Country	1997-98 Season	1998-99 Season
Benin	148,000	145,000
Burkina Faso	142,000	145,000
Côte d'Ivoire	149,000	150,000
Mali	221,000	220,000
Total	660,000	660,000

textile industries – stopped investing in the renovation of equipment or the creation of modern production units. Except for the creation of an integrated textile company, SOTEXKA, in Senegal in 1988 – founded to export ready-to-wear clothing – no major investments were made in the region.

Open to the globalisation of the textile industry and having no favourable perspectives on the local market, the European industrial promoters re-oriented their investments toward the newly emerging countries in Asia or Eastern Europe and sold their interests in the industries in the WAEMU region. Simultaneously, local investors sought to reactivate, with varying degrees of success, the companies left in difficulty or shut down by the Europeans. On the political level, and often under the pressure of international institutions, this period of crisis led the countries to reduce the policy of increasing the value of

cotton by the local industry and to search less for activities to substitute for imports. Above all, it pushed them to end their involvement in the development of the textile sector.

The situation today

The countries of the WAEMU region are now experiencing satisfactory results from their cotton efforts. Today, these countries have become large producers on a world scale. The main areas of cotton fibre production are indicated in Table 1.

These figures are to be compared with those of global production: 19.9 million tonnes for the 1997-98 season and 18.7 million tonnes in 1998-99. WAE-MU therefore supplies approximately 3.5% of global cotton production. Although the fibres produced are relatively short, the quality of the cotton of this region is appreciated globally. The raw material for the textile industry is therefore locally available. Unfortunately, only 5% to

8% of this production is transformed locally. The cotton producers are mixed state companies. To assist the textile sector and because of the devaluation of the CFA Franc, the textile industry can often benefit from local cotton prices that are lower than those quoted on world markets. Therefore, the raw material cost is favourable. This advantageous situation cannot last indefinitely because the international institutions are putting pressure on the states to privatise the cotton sector, and this will lead to prices aligned with those of the world markets. Why should cotton be sold locally at a reduced price to textile transformers when it can be exported at a higher price?

With its population, the WAEMU region's market for cotton fabric can be estimated as follows:

- fancy fabric: a minimum of 80 to 100 million metres, or 16,000 tonnes of cotton;
- wax fabric: 30 to 40 million metres, or 7000 tonnes of cotton;
- other fabrics: 100 to 120 million metres, or approximately 22,000 tonnes of cotton.

Thus, there is a local market which, if 100% satisfied, should be able to sustain from six to eight textile printing units and the same number of dyeing units. Moreover, the export demand for thread or unbleached cotton fabric is very high. The EU alone annually imports 480,000 tonnes of thread and 2.8 million tonnes of unbleached fabric. In terms of volume, there is a market. The only problem remaining is competitiveness on the world market.

As we have already stated, numerous textile companies have disappeared and the remaining ones have reduced their production. The current situation of the textile units is presented in Table 2.

It is evident from this brief analysis that, globally and

FILSAH: a success in Burkina Faso

In contrast to the general depression of the cotton sector in the WAEMU region, the FILSAH cotton spinning company in Burkina Faso is implementing open end spinning technology (as opposed to ring spinning) in light of its numerous advantages, especially in the start-up phase. It will have a 4000-tonne annual production capacity intended entirely for Europe. Product marketing is fully covered by prior agreements with weaving companies, mainly Belgian and French. The annual sales figure is expected to reach €6 million. This unit, which will employ 75 persons and is currently being built near the cotton ginning site, will be operational in July or August. Thus, for the first time, a private Burkinabé company will export not raw cotton but a finished product: cotton thread. The CDI provided assistance in the execution of the feasibility study to present the €4.8 million project to the European Investment Bank (EIB) in August 1998. The costs of the study were co-financed by the CDI and the SABAP Luxembourg Holding company. The negotiation of the allocation of credits required was jointly led by the EIB, the BOAD (West African Development Bank) and the local promoter – a company well known by CDI, the Groupe Winner Industrie located in Bobo Dioulasso – that provided €1.8 million of the total investment. Moreover, FILSAH has asked the CDI to provide technical assistance and train personnel.

CDI Contact: Jean-Marie Roth

Table 2: Current Situation of Textile Units in the WAEMU Region

Country	Company	Situation
Benin	COTEB SOBETEX	Poor material, energy and machine output problems. Operates at between 40% and 50% of its capacity (5 to 6 million metres). Produces good quality loincloth fabric.
Burkina Faso	FASO SANI	Operates at 50% of its capacity (6 million metres) but the spinning and weaving equipment is in bad shape. Problems with very high energy costs.
Côte d'Ivoire	UTEXI COTIVO ERG INIWAX	These four units resulting from the complete restructuring of the local textile sector operate relatively well.
Mali	ITEMA	Irregular production.
Niger	COMATEX SONITEXTIL	Experiencing some operational difficulties. Printing only. Operates at between 30% and 40% of its capacity.
Senegal	NSTS/FTT	Operates properly and produces thread and unbleached fabrics for local and export markets. The investments made recently involved used, but good quality equipment.
	SOTEXKA	Started again as a leased business in 1997. Spinning and weaving for export and local markets. Finishing activity never really put into operation.
	ICOTAF SOTIBA SOSEFIL CCV	Operates at 10% of its capacity. Operates at between 10% and 20% of its capacity. Operates relatively well. Operates relatively well.
Togo	TOGOTEX	Operates at between 50% and 60% of its capacity.

compared to what it was prior to 1985, the WAEMU textile industry faces some problems.

Outdated material and demotivated investors

Except for a few relatively recent units with equipment installed more than ten years ago, WAEMU textile companies are equipped with old machines. This is a detrimental situation in spinning and weaving as technological evolution has led to significantly higher quality and productivity. The backward state of the WAEMU textile sector will be difficult – if not impossible because of the high costs involved – to remedy in comparison with other large world producers.

Among the 2.7 million cotton spinning spindles invested in 1996 (of which 1.5 million in India and 410,000 in Turkey) and the 2.8 million spindles invested in 1997 (of which 1 million in India, 230,000 in Indonesia and 670,000 in Turkey), none were invested in the WAEMU. Out of the total 35.6 million cotton spinning spindles throughout the world, Africa as a whole possesses only 1.1 million, most of them very old, whereas Asia

has 24 million. Among the 53,600 weaving looms without shuttles purchased globally in 1997, 70% were in Asia (of which 17,000 in China) and 17% in Western Europe (a large part of which went to Turkey). Only some 1.7% was invested in Africa and none in the WAEMU region. Out of the total 690,000 weaving looms without shuttles (modern technology) throughout the world, only 20,000 (or barely 3%) are spread over the African continent. On the other hand, out of the 1,775,000 looms with shuttles (older technology), 190,000 (or nearly 11%) are in Africa.

Moreover, the market has experienced decreases in the prices of thread and fabric. Today, 1 kg of No.50 combed cotton thread sells for (CIF Europe) €2.58, 1 kg of No.30 carded cotton thread for €2.64 and 1 kg of No.20 open end thread for €1.13. At the same time on the world market, 1 kg of cotton

from the WAEMU sells for €1.13. Yet it is common knowledge that the raw material should only represent 40% of the selling price for a spinning company to be profitable. With €1.13 of raw material, it would be necessary to sell a kilogram of carded thread for approximately €2.84. This is far from the case! A 50/50 27x27 fabric that is 160 cm wide sells for 58 cents per metre, or approximately €2.84/kg, which only represents the theoretical price of the thread and leaves nothing to cover the weaving costs *per se*. At present, the states enable their textile industries to benefit from reduced cotton prices, and this allows some companies to export thread or fabric to Europe. This is the case for NSTS/FTT and CCV in Senegal, ERG and COTIVO in Côte d'Ivoire, COTEB and SOBETEX in Benin. Nonetheless, the quantities exported to Europe in 1997 remained low, but they are expected to have increased in 1998 because of the surge of NSTS/FTT. Table 3 includes some figures for 1997.

Which opportunities can be identified?

Today, the WAEMU textile industry's perspectives for exporting thread and 'classical' or 'generic' unbleached fabrics can only be marginal. On the other hand, is it possible – parallel or not to 'classical' production – to produce small quantities of more elaborate threads that would generate larger margins?

With regard to the local market, it would be utopian to envisage a rapid improvement in purchasing power accompanied by a strong revival of consumption levels. On the other hand, it is obvious that there is still a

Table 3: Quantities of cotton exported to Europe in 1997

Country	Thread (tonnes)	Fabric or Denim (metres)
Côte d'Ivoire	730	20,000,000
Benin	680	5,000,000
Senegal	322	181,000

significant demand that should be satisfied as much as possible by local textile industries. Why not consider a new approach and adapt the total production capacity of loincloth fabric to meet the needs of the market? It is undoubtedly more reasonable to have fewer units operating at 80% to 100% of their capacity – thus covering their fixed costs – rather than a greater number of units operating at only 40% to 50% capacity.

Is it unreasonable to think that it would be more logical to concentrate spinning and weaving activities in the countries with high levels of cotton production inasmuch as it proves economically profitable to maintain them? Is it illogical to envisage, rather than large, single-product companies, smaller concerns that seek to satisfy the needs of the local markets? Such products would include loincloth fabric, of course, but



L. Henschel

also absorbent cotton wool, mosquito nets, hosiery, furnishing fabric, etc. Why not seek to reactivate the production of 'Guinea' fabric, highly appreciated by the Saharans and which has a market demand of 8 to 10 million metres that cannot be satisfied by the current suppliers (SOTIBA and SONITEXTIL) because of the poor state of their equipment?

Knowing that the cotton from the WAEMU region is often

Loading cotton on to a lorry. The textile industry in the WAEMU countries faces some difficulties but there are also some reasons for optimism

devalued because it is collected and packed in polypropylene sacks, whose fibres or waste soil the cotton, why not envisage the industrial production of cotton sacks? Nor should one ignore the importance of the region's textile artisans as they represent a significant market for unbleached thread and fabric.

A new subsidiary of the Groupe NSTS/FTT in Senegal

La Nouvelle Société Textile Sénégalaise (NSTS) is the former Société Textile Sénégalaise de Thiès bought by its current Franco-Senegalese shareholders in August 1991 after three years of inactivity. The spinning and weaving unit was renovated in 1991, and 48 weaving looms were brought back into service in January 1992. NSTS employs 230 persons and has an annual spinning capacity of 1800 tonnes and 300,000 metres of weaving. It produces unbleached thread for local small-scale weavers in addition to unbleached fabric in widths ranging from 127 cm (for the local market) to 300 cm (for export to Europe).

Having provided financial support to NSTS for the renovation of its installation, the resumption of its activities in 1992 and the revival of its exports to Europe, the CDI decided, in 1994, to contribute to the financing of a technical and commercial study involving the second phase of the spinning modernisation and the renovation of the weaving equipment. Thanks to this study, NSTS was able to obtain a bridging loan from local banks and acquire 112 weaving looms as recommended in the modernisation plan.

The new project underway involves the beginning of production of the new NSTS/FTT group subsidiary, which has become the West African leader in the field of spinning and weaving. In fact, it involves the consolidation of a CDI reference project. Indeed, it was thanks to CDI backing in 1996 that NSTS was able to establish its FTT subsidiary. FTT's production is meant to complete the product range offered by the group. This production, 90% of which is intended for export, will first of all involve large gauge thread, used in the manufacturing of mass market articles such as jeans, work clothes, home linens, etc. Firm contracts have already been signed with major clients in France, Switzerland and the United States.

To solve the few technical problems that delayed the launching of the plant and honour its obligations to its clients, NSTS/FTT requested two separate types of support from CDI: start-up assistance in order to begin production as quickly as possible and technical assistance to organise production and maintenance, to provide in-depth training to the technical staff and train the employees how to operate the equipment.

CDI Contact: Hamed Sow

What will be CDI's strategy?

The perspectives for the textile industry in WAEMU countries are difficult – granted, but not non-existent. The CDI is currently carrying out a detailed study of the region's textile companies (equipment, strengths and weaknesses), as well as an in-depth analysis of the European market, because potential clients – notably British – have expressed an interest in the region's cotton. On this basis, the CDI will, if the need is apparent and the various parties so desire, quickly organise meetings between industrialists and potential investors. The objective would be to define together a global strategy for the textile industry in the WAEMU countries.

CDI Contact: Hamed Sow

In the sectors

Uganda: Graphic Systems (U) Ltd, awarded for the best investor in 1998

Among the various commercial outlets for the printing sector, a non-exploited niche has been identified in the field of packaging and labelling in Kampala. There is an opportunity to be seized by a mid-size production facility. The CDI is providing assistance together with the General Administration of Cooperation and Development (Belgium).

Graphic Systems (U) Ltd was inaugurated in November 1997. The company strives to supply superior quality products in industrial labelling, packaging and both commercial and general printing in Uganda. The project aims to modernise the activity by adding the production of labels and packaging – cardboard or paper – intended for valuable equipment and objects. It will no longer be necessary to rely on foreign suppliers.

In addition to the existing machines to be transferred from a unit located in Kinshasa, this project calls for the latest equipment and the most recent techniques to meet the needs identified while minimising storage costs. The designers took into consideration all the colours and dimensions allowed by multi-colour offset printers, with a production capacity scheduled to reach 10,000 sheets per hour, or 84,000 sheets per day.

Graphic Systems (U) Ltd.
The project is designed to modernise the company's operation

This unit, which will require as many as 90 persons, should be able to supply 20% of the market, mainly clients interested in high quality products. Annual turnover has been estimated at €1.8 million for an investment of €2.8 million. An 18-month moratorium has been obtained for the repayment of the first instalment of the loan contracted to finance this extension of Graphic Systems.

Alongside the local promoters, a European partner – in this case, the Belgian company Flint Ltd – supplied machines and already owns 15% of Graphic Systems' stock. The Belgian company has sent three permanent employees and technicians on the basis of temporary contracts. The current project again calls upon the services of Flint. Together with the GACD, the CDI is providing its support in the installation of the machines and in the training of 40 employees to learn the printing techniques required to launch this unit. ■

CDI Contact: Anani Adade-Helledy

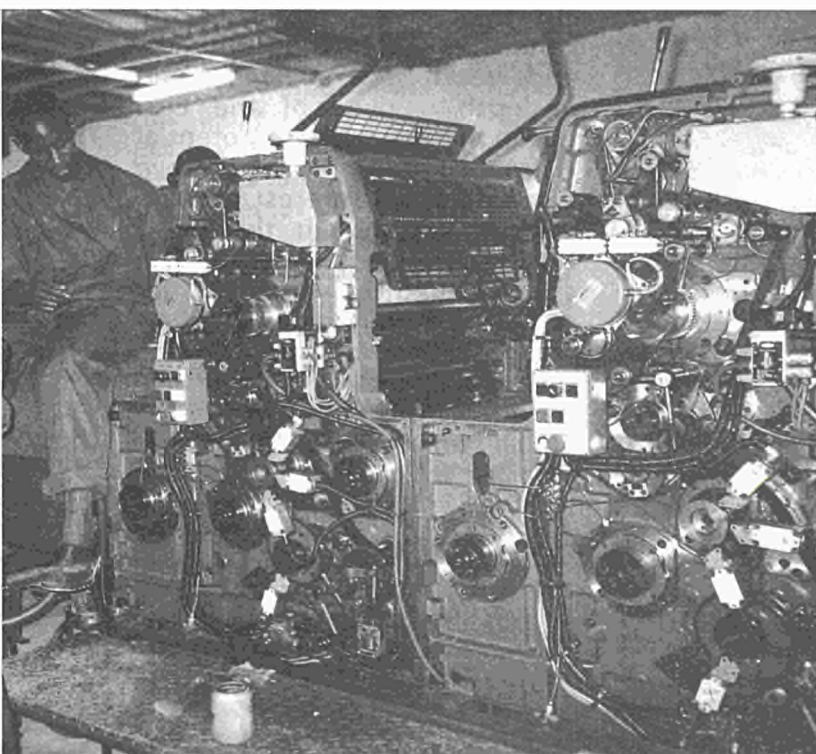
Peter Industria Moçambicana (PIM): Shoe production in Mozambique

PIM is a Mozambican joint venture that encompasses a Portuguese company and seeks to increase its production of men's, women's, children's and safety shoes.

On July 2, 1996, the Portuguese company Peter Industria, located in Porto – one of four companies in the country to produce safety shoes and whose shareholders are German and Portuguese – inaugurated a new production line for this type of equipment in Maputo: *Peter Industria Moçambicana Lda* (PIM). The main objective of the project designed for the Mozambican plant is the export of semi-finished products (shoe uppers) to the Portuguese parent company and to German clients, the export of finished shoes to the Portuguese and German markets and the supply of finished products to the domestic, Angolan and South African markets. Current production – at full capacity – is 400 units per day. For this start-up phase, the CDI and the ICEP (Investments, Trade and Tourism of Portugal) co-financed the technical assistance and the training of personnel. The company also received additional assistance for a market study.

The current project is in response to the demand for production growth and diversification, which will require the hiring of 350 additional people. The company plans to produce 4000 pairs of shoes per day. The Portuguese parent company remains the European partner for this project. The CDI was called upon for assistance in the preparation of financial documents intended to demonstrate the project's viability to the banks. The study was co-financed by the DEG (German financial and development institution) which has also shown its interest in taking part in financing the proposed expansion. ■

CDI Contact: Jorge Borges



CDI facts and figures

Operational Activities

The CDI is scoring points by rationalising its action. As opposed to quantity, it is focusing on impact.

The key indicators for 1998 continued to show improvement over all preceding years. The budget grew by 5.7% over 1997, but the number of companies assisted increased 9%, and the quantity of interventions increased 6%. On the other hand, the annual growth of the number of companies assisted is lower (than in 1997) because of a lack of personnel and supplementary budget at the Centre's disposal. The Centre managed to make the most of gains made in increased productivity and organisational changes. The budget constraints constitute the major limitation to the Centre's being able to assist a greater number of ACP companies.

How are the best projects chosen?

The CDI uses various channels to gather viable requests. In 1998, its ACP network remained at 59 antennas and there were 20 correspondents in the network. The traditional European network included 42 cooperating institutions.

The industrial partnership meetings are also important as a means of identifying new projects and promoting the Centre. The consistently growing number of requests – from 575 in 1994 to 1225 in 1998 – was well above the available budget. The emphasis is thus put on quality by better selecting the beneficiary companies and projects and by training the network's personnel to evaluate the requests to be submitted. A growing number of requests is a result of the Centre targeting a sector or region. Although the requests for assistance always exceed CDI's ability to respond, a greater number of beneficiaries were served thanks to a transfer of part of the budget to Title III (Intervention Programme). The Centre was thus able to assist 597 companies in 1998, compared with 192 in 1994 and 547 in 1997.

Little change was noted in the characteristics of the companies assisted in 1998. 67% of them benefited from an investment of less than €2 million.

The success of partnerships

Partnership between European and ACP companies always draws a high degree of interest. The main European countries having provided partners were Portugal, France, Belgium and the United Kingdom.

Industrial partnership meetings and seminars also proved to be very effective means of promoting ACP-EU industrial cooperation. From the initial number of three meetings per year, there were nine in 1995, 12 in 1996, 15 in 1997 and 18 in 1998. Another positive effect of these meetings and seminars is the improvement of CDI's knowledge of the specific industrial sub-sectors in the ACP and/or EU regions targeted. The main performance indicators all show clear progress. This is the result of clear definition of the objectives assigned to CDI personnel as well as of the continuous improvement of operations. Close follow-up and the accurate measurement of impact study constitute important tools for continued improvement. ■ CDI

Contact: Jean-Marie Delchambre

Impact study on CDI interventions

1993-1998: five years of growing success. The CDI plans to do even better in 1999.

Between 1993 and 1997, the number of interventions made by CDI for the benefit of ACP countries grew from 130 to 748. In 1998, the number of completed projects recorded was similar to that of 1997. This spectacular growth over five years required that CDI verify the quality of its interventions and their real impact. By choosing a representative sample of 21% of the 387 companies having benefited from at least one CDI intervention completed in 1997, the CDI gathered some interesting information on the 'quality of service' and the result of its actions. Between 1997 and August 1998, when this study was carried out, the CDI estimates that approximately 11,500 new jobs were

ACP enterprises assisted in 1998

by sector	
Agro industries	44.6%
Building materials	27.8%
Leather and textile	15.4%
Others	12.2%

by region	
Southern Africa	21.1%
West Africa	24.6%
East Africa	21.8%
Central Africa	9.2%
Caribbean	11.6%
Pacific	11.7%

created in the 387 companies assisted, that a net investment of €249 million was made and that 65% of the companies assisted indicated a growth in their business. The CDI provided them with €4.2 million of direct assistance.

The CDI does not try to take all the praise for these results for itself. A number of other factors came into play, the least of which is certainly not the private sector's dynamism. The CDI does claim to be the driving force, not only in attracting other resources but also in the impetus given to the orientations that generate prosperity. With regard to the quality of services provided by the CDI, 85% of the companies expressed their overall satisfaction, and 32% of them rated the services as excellent. The CDI is still intensifying and sharpening the analysis of its actions by including it as a component of its daily operations. ■ CDI Contact: Daniel Nairac

Participation in partnership meetings and seminars organised or co-organised by CDI

	ACP participants	EU participants
1993	85	30
1994	50	43
1995	138	56
1996	221	104
1997	315	125
1998	340	172

In brief

SIAGRO 99/SOPIMAR 99 Fairs

The SIAGRO 99 International Agro-Industries Fair held from February 3-6 last year in Dakar with the CDI's backing, aimed to stimulate the production of raw materials intended for food and their processing. SIAGRO 99 – encompassing the SOPIMAR 99 fair devoted to the fishing sector – had the objective of promoting:

- processing, preservation and marketing of food products, notably fruits and vegetables, oleaginous plants, cereals, coffee, cocoa, breeding and fishing;
- investments in these various sectors;
- exchanges and market development, particularly the sub-regional markets;
- meetings between professionals: producers and buyers, promoters and financial backers.

In collaboration with ADEPTA (Association for the Development of the international Exchanges of Agro-industry Products and Techniques, which includes the major French manufacturers of equipment destined for agro-industry), the CDI had invited some 20 West African companies: 10 from the fruit sector, four professional associations from the poultry sector and six from the tuna sector.

■ CDI Contacts: Paul Chotard/
Chérif Touré/Tommy Pedersen

Tuna seminar in Senegal

A meeting of operators from the Senegalese tuna sector was held from November 30 to December 4 in Dakar bringing together industrial operators, canners and ship owners. The meeting was prepared in part by the CDI antennae. First of all, with regard to catching, it appears that most of the unloading of tuna in Dakar is done by long liners and line fishers flying a foreign flag, of which only a part is based in Dakar. One of the conclusions made by the participants concerns the backing of training in 'à la matie' fishing which would enable the Senegalese fleet of line fishers to pursue its development.

On the other hand, with regard to processing/increased value, the participants highlighted the economic and structural difficulties encountered at the end of 1998. In spite of the advantage provided by the duty exoneration for ACP products entering the EU, Senegalese canneries have to face strong South American and Asian competition, aggravated by the financial crisis in Asia since July 1997. 1998 also witnessed large investments made to bring local facilities up to European hygiene standards. The participants formulated industrial solutions that must be accompanied by institutional measures aimed at the sector's recovery.

■ CDI Contact: Paul Chotard

Cooperation between Sweden and the CDI

On December 2 and 3, 1998, Mr. Matos Rosa, Deputy Director of the CDI, carried out a mission in Stockholm to review the activities

of the past year, define the priority sectors and choose the ACP countries in which to intervene. An agreement was concluded to qualify the wood manufacturing sector (notably soft woods) as a priority. The joint initiatives of Sweden and the CDI in this sector will be implemented in Southern Africa. It was also decided to launch a partnership programme in 1999 in three priority countries: Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia.

The CDI and SIDA (Swedish International Development Agency) decided to extend their current agreement protocol until the end of the Lomé Convention. Other meetings were held with the *Swefund* (Swedish Development Finance Corporation), the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Association of Swedish Chambers of Commerce and Industry and certain municipalities, to back the growth and international development of small and medium-sized Swedish companies.

■ CDI Contacts: Fernando Matos Rosa and
Paolo Balzan

Marble: Sectoral mission on natural stone in the Dominican Republic

Dominican Republic marbles are renowned for their very high quality. The country has significant reserves of various types of marble but also granites. A number of Spanish stone companies have expressed their interest in increasing the value of the available resources, in partnership with Dominican Republic companies. To stimulate the process of bringing them together, the CDI, in cooperation with ICEX (Spain), organised a sectoral mission on stone in Saint Domingo from February 8-12, 1999. Some twelve Spanish companies interested in concluding technical, commercial and/or financial agreements made the trip that enabled them to visit ten or so marble and granite quarries as well as five processing plants. This mission was part of the framework of actions previously taken by the CDI in the sector.

■ CDI Contact: Sid Boubekeur

Training in Trinidad on aggregate quarry exploitation techniques

The courses given in November 1998 and January 1999 and financed by the CDI and the University of the West Indies (UWI) were intended for the personnel of eight Caribbean companies that exploit aggregate quarries. The project aimed to train the personnel concerned to improve the productivity and efficiency of the quarries. The teaching staff and the material required were provided by the Trinidad and Doncaster College (GB) and UWI. The idea was to train participants to make better use of the exploitation material, to achieve optimal processing of the materials obtained and to improve safety. At the end of the three sessions, the participants had to sit an exam to obtain the diploma granted by the British Quarry Training Council.

■ CDI Contact: Sid Boubekeur

CDI/EDFI Meeting

On January 15, 1999, in Brussels, the CDI took part in a meeting on financial intermediaries organised by EDFI (European Development Finance Institutions). In addition to the 12 permanent EDFI members, other participants

included the SFI (International Financial Company), the EIB (European Investment Bank), representatives of the European Commission, the KfW, an OEDC representative and ING Barings. The topics discussed covered:

- SFI's experience with financial intermediaries in developing countries; analysis and experience of various financial instruments used by the SFI in these countries;
- the participants' experience in the creation and management of venture capital funds in developing countries;
- an analysis of local financing instruments and the possibilities of mobilising local resources; debate led by the EIB, the SFI and the CDC (Commonwealth Development Corporation).

■ CDI Contacts: Eckhard Hinzen and
Jean-Marie Roth

Two new guides

The CDI has published two new technical guides: one is devoted to the raising of tilapias and the other to semi-industrial fishing in Mozambique.

The former covers all the technical and economic/financial aspects related to raising the fish known as 'carp' in French-speaking Africa but which actually has 80 species, practically all of them from the African continent. The chapter devoted to technical equipment and recommended European suppliers is of particular interest.

The second guide – of which a Portuguese version is being prepared – covers the topic from a number of angles, asking such questions as how the value of under-exploited fish resources can be exploited and how the imbalance in the exploitation of major fish resources can be corrected. The private companies are showing signs of a second wind; now it is time to reinforce the local capacities thanks to partnerships with experienced actors familiar with European hygiene standards.

■ CDI Contact: Patrick Keene

Collaboration with the MEDEF

A working meeting was held in December 1998 in Paris between Mr. Fernando Matos Rosa, Deputy Director of the CDI, and the management of MEDEF International. The MEDEF (Movement of French Enterprises) is the new designation of the CNPF (National Council of French Employers). The importance placed by the MEDEF on the cooperation between the French private sector and the ACP countries justifies the development of relations between the CDI and the MEDEF. Partnership meetings will be organised in the near future either in ACP countries or in France. The MEDEF recently organised missions of French companies to Cameroon and Mozambique. The possible industrial partnerships as a result of these missions will be examined jointly and eventually assisted by the CDI.

■ CDI Contact: Fernando Matos Rosa

The potential of small-scale food processing for rural economies

by Dr Martin H. Dietz*

During a recent conference on small-scale food processing, a Ugandan woman entrepreneur chatted with me about her oil mill which, according to her, was running well and profitably. Her difficulty was to keep the Chinese-made equipment running. For that her husband has to travel to China once a year to buy parts for the oil expeller. 'No, even with that annual excursion to the East, the business gives reasonable profit', she commented.

New opportunities for entrepreneurs through changing tastes and habits

The demand for processed or readily prepared foods has increased enormously in many countries over the past decades, mainly due to a change in food consumption patterns and habits. The products in demand are staple foods, such as cereal flours or edible oils, food items that require some preservation for sale in the urban market, such as milk, or new food items such as sauces, ketchup, jams, fruit juices and dried fruits.

Since the investment required to set up small-scale food

processing operations may range from a few hundred to a few thousand \$US, there is an obvious opportunity for small entrepreneurs to enter this new market. Food processing has traditionally been the domain of women in many societies. There are many examples where women have moved into a small food processing business to help them earn the money they badly need to sustain their families and themselves. Yet, despite all these potentials, the problems for entrepreneurs to get started and operate in this subsector are considerable; the discussion with the Ugandan oil miller has given a glimpse of them.

New opportunities for development?

The term *small-scale food processing* is still rarely found in the indices of development litera-

ture and project databases. Neither governments of developing countries nor donor agencies have paid much attention to this field so far. Where they have done so, the focus of the intervention has been mainly on reducing post harvest losses through improved technologies. In other cases a rather scattered *island approach* was taken: here a maize mill for a women's group, there an oil mill for a village community. Food processing enterprises as a business were rarely considered.

Only recently have some organisations started to look at small-scale food processing as a subsector that can contribute significantly to the development of the rural economy. In September

Spicy sauces produced by a small-scale processing operation in Grenada. The demand for processed or readily prepared foods has increased enormously in recent years

* Food technologist who has worked as an associate consultant with FAKT since 1991



Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation

Postbus 380,
6700 AJ Wageningen,
Netherlands

Tel. (31) 317 467100
Fax (31) 317 460067
E-mail cta@cta.nl
Website: www.cta.nl

The Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA) was established in 1983 under the Lomé Convention between the ACP (African, Caribbean and Pacific) Group of States and the European Union Member States. CTA's tasks are to develop and provide services that improve access to information for agricultural and rural development, and to strengthen the capacity of ACP countries to produce, acquire, exchange and utilise information in these areas.



1995, a five-day international workshop on *the Contribution of Small-Scale Food Processing to Food Security* organised by DSE/ATSAF in Bonn discussed, among other things, strategies for strengthening small food processing enterprises. The issue of food processing was also discussed in a workshop entitled *Farmer Strategies for Market Orientation in ACP Agriculture*, which was held in October 1995 in Dublin, Ireland (CTA/Teagasc).

The CTA/FAKT study

Following a series of meetings and consultations, CTA initiated a study of the small-scale food processing sector in Tanzania and Uganda in 1997 which was coordinated by FAKT. The study was able to highlight potentials and constraints in more detail. Markets for processed food products are expanding in both countries – in Uganda at a faster pace than in Tanzania. Each country imports processed food products to the tune of around \$US50 million and by far the largest share is taken up by edible oils. Changing lifestyles and increasing income levels lead rural and, in particular, urban consumers to demand snacks, drinks and convenience foods.

The value added realised through small-scale food processing

The value added to agricultural produce on its way from the farm gate to the consumer household through processing, storing and trading is very significant, usually amounting to several hundred percent! In the case of sunflower oil in Tanzania, the value added through extracting oil from seed amounts to no less than 200% to 300%. Milk when sold pasteurised to consumers in Kenya fetches a price that is three times the price of raw milk at the farm gate.

The processing of basic food commodities (such as cereals and oilseeds) in rural enterprises will provide benefits to farmers



Packaging maize meal. Enterprises that offer processing services to farmers will also allow producers to take their share in the value addition

either directly (e.g. through service milling) or indirectly (a reliable, local market). A recently initiated, integrated support project for oilseed processing in Tanzania shows some of the effects that are possible. Since the start-up of privately-owned, small service mills in a sunflower-growing area where farmers used to sell to a large oil miller, prices for oilseeds at the farm gate have gone up by 30%-40%, prices for sunflower oil in the village have come down by 20%, while oilseed farmers can now earn 80% to 100% more by selling the oil in villages nearby rather than selling the oilseeds to the one miller. At the same time, the owner of the oil mill is making reasonable profits, being able to repay the loan for the investment within one year. As another spin-off effect, the press cake, which is a by-product from oilseed processing, now remains within the area and can be used locally as animal feed.

Rural-based, small-scale food processing enterprises can retain some of this value added within the rural economy. Enterprises that offer processing services to farmers will also allow producers to take their share of the added value, thus giving

them an incentive to expand their production. At the same time the entrepreneur can operate his/her unit with a much smaller amount of working capital.

The myriad problems that entrepreneurs have to face

Even in the field of basic food processing, such as cereal and oilseed milling, entrepreneurs have hardly any choice of technology. Often, as in the example of our Ugandan woman entrepreneur, the equipment has to be imported. Maintenance services in rural areas are very poorly developed. For financing the investment, which 18 generally between \$1000 and \$5000, family savings and other sources have to be tapped since banks rarely provide the capital for such enterprises.

New food products for the market – for example dried fruits, fruit juices or pasteurised milk – can provide a significant and important stimulus to agriculture to diversify and develop a stronger market orientation. However, once an entrepreneur plans to

venture into producing new types of food products for the market, the struggle will start on all fronts! Questions that will need answering include:

- Who can provide assistance to carry out market studies and to identify suitable products and processing technologies?
- Who can advise on a cost-effective product promotion in new markets?
- Who will advise on choosing and procuring appropriate technology that will allow a profitable operation in the given context? In most cases equipment will not be readily available locally.
- What packaging material can be used?
- Who can design an attractive label? Few artists have turned to this interesting commercial field.
- Where can capital for the investment and for the business operation be obtained from? Most banks will be very hesitant! Alternative financing institutions have often set their focus on micro-credits for small trading, which does not meet the needs of a food processing entrepreneur.
- How can sufficient raw material be procured so that the equipment can operate for as long as possible during the year?
- How can the product best be marketed?

Small or large scale?

A major headache for food processors is the acquisition of sufficient raw material to enable them to utilise their processing capacity for as long as possible during the year. Small enterprises seem far more compatible with the small and diversified farming structure and the often poorly developed transport infrastructure in rural areas. In fact, large-scale processors often require agriculture to adjust to a plantation-type production mode for it to supply sufficient raw material.



Small food processing entrepreneurs have a limited choice of technologies

Large-scale processing units often need raw material of a particular specification that suits the technology which they use. However, farmers are not interested in adjusting their crops to the varieties needed by industry as they hesitate to rely on just one buyer and prefer to supply different markets. Furthermore, large enterprises have to rely on technologies which can only be serviced and maintained with inputs, i.e. know-how, skills and spare parts from industrialised countries. That presents a heavy cost burden both on the company and on the national economy.

Support structures for small-scale food processors

Support services for small-scale food processors, as was shown by the CTA/FAKT study, often fail to address the actual needs of entrepreneurs, or the delivery mechanisms of these ser-

Producing pasta from flour in Somalia.
The processing of basic food commodities is the least complex



vices are such that they cannot make use of them. They exist in isolation with little coordination among them. Here is the university R+D department developing a food processing technology which does not address the market needs or which completely disregards economics; there is the NGO offering training courses for women in small-scale food processing, but with no capacity for efficient follow-up (market support, market advice, etc.) or to provide assistance for accessing the required capital.

In conclusion, the study suggested four key areas of need:

- Credit facilities that address the needs for investment and working capital of small entrepreneurs;
- Availability of a choice of technologies; technology packages in which individual components fit together; skills and competence in technology maintenance in rural-based workshops;
- Advice and training on matters of business management and technology;
- Market information, skills in market studies and assessments and marketing advice.

The Entebbe workshop: bringing together some of the key actors

With the study as a base CTA, together with DSE, NARO and FAKT, invited a group of key actors to participate in a workshop in Entebbe in November 1998. The group had the task of analysing constraints and potentials of small-scale food processing and reviewing and elaborating strategies for strengthening this sector. Around 60 people from Eastern and Southern Africa and a few from Europe took part in the five-day event: consultants, trainers, market experts, representatives of government institutions, people from financial institutions and development projects; the participation of around 10 small entrepreneurs ensured

that the meeting did not drift into abstract discussions.

Participants felt that market capacity is not the key constraint; rather, it is finding access to the right market segment! For that, appropriate, cost-effective and sustainable market information systems are required. Introducing new products into the market requires enormous effort and capacities. This was demonstrated through a report on the experience of women's groups producing and selling dried fruits in Kenya.

Economic possibilities were particularly evident: small food processors play an important part in generating and securing income and employment in rural areas. Figures from Uganda suggest that nearly half of all people employed in the manufacturing sector work in food-processing related activities. World Bank research findings have shown that 40% of production value added in sub-Saharan Africa is generated by food processing, against 14% for the textile industry. Small-scale food processing does not require an extensive logistical infrastructure; processing within

the region helps to reduce post-harvest losses and consequently is an important step towards increasing food availability and to achieving greater food security.

The papers and discussions on strategies focused mainly on two areas: providing integrated, sustainable support through a private or public sector organisation and the establishment of associations which are assigned the functions of lobbying and support services. For the follow-up to the workshop some groups developed very specific plans with regard to setting up associations, assessing and developing training courses, developing networks and tackling the problem of food processing technologies.

Will jam-making ever appear on the agendas of development agencies?

The potential of small-scale food processing needs to be evaluated seriously. It is important to carry out this exercise both on the supply and market sides. Too many failures in the past focused on production while ignoring the markets. The processing of basic food commodities is

the least complex since agricultural production and markets are relatively well-organised and established. Here, most impact can probably be achieved. There is considerable potential for new food products (such as jam); careful market studies and support are essential for success.

Support services need to take a business-like approach. They have to understand that enterprises are made up of more than just technology or book-keeping. An integration of services is crucial, which does not mean that an organisation has to offer everything; they need to be able to point entrepreneurs to the address which can provide competent services. Support services do not come free. We need to learn more about the experience with different models which seriously address the issue of sustainability. We need to be realistic in our judgment with regard to the costs that can be and should be shouldered by small entrepreneurs and the costs that have to be shouldered by the public or by development agencies. ■

Understanding the small-scale food processing sector

Improving the availability of information on small-scale food processing has been one of CTA's preoccupations for many years. The main article by Martin Dietz mentions the meetings that were held in Bonn and Dublin in 1995. In 1996, CTA reviewed the techniques being used in Africa to process cereals, and root and tuber crops, and held a consultative meeting at Wageningen, Netherlands, which reviewed enterprises and proposals for strengthening small-scale food processing initiatives in Africa. In the same year, CTA commissioned CIRAD to carry out case studies in the Congo and in Cameroon designed to identify opportunities for developing small-scale enterprises for processing cassava and maize.

The 1996 meeting in Wageningen recommended that CTA should support studies and workshops involving the main stakeholders in the food-processing sector at national levels. In response, CTA undertook two related activities in 1997: a workshop in Malawi on the development of entrepreneurship in small-scale food processing and a review, carried out by FAKT in Tanzania and Uganda, of support services and programmes for small-scale food processing in these two countries.

In 1998, in addition to the Entebbe workshop mentioned in Dr Dietz's article, CTA commissioned CIRAD to review the role of institutions in disseminating expertise to small food processors in Benin and Senegal.

A number of co-publications on small-scale food processing are available to subscribers in ACP countries who have registered with CTA's Publications Distribution Service. Others may purchase copies from booksellers or from the publishers, but not from CTA. Among the titles available are:

La conservation des aliments, Série Agrodok, Agromisa/CTA, 1988, 76pp. ISBN 90 72746 03 1 – CTA number 113, 5 CTA credit points

Preservation of foods, Agrodok-series, Agromisa/CTA, 1990, 88pp. ISBN 90 72764 03 1 – CTA number 188, 5 CTA credit points

Preparation of dairy products, Agrodok-series, Agromisa/CTA, 1991, 58pp. ISBN 90 72746 15 5 – CTA number 189, 5 CTA credit points

La préparation des laitages, Série Agrodok, Agromisa/CTA, 1991, 72pp. ISBN 90 72746 15 5 – CTA number 311, 5 CTA credit points

Small-scale food processing: a guide to appropriate equipment, CTA/ITDG, 1992, 174pp. ISBN 1 85339 108 5 – CTA number 448, 40 CTA credit points

Making safe food. A guide to safe food handling and packaging for small scale producers, CTA/IT Publications, 1993, 42pp. CTA number 461, 5 CTA credit points

Hygiène et production alimentaire. Manuel destiné aux petits producteurs, sur les règles d'hygiène pour la production et l'emballage des produits alimentaires, ITDG/CTA, 1993, 42pp. CTA number 551 – 5 CTA credit points

Preservation of fish and meat, Agrodok-series, Agromisa/CTA, 1994, 64pp. ISBN 90 72746 48 1 – CTA number 588, 5 CTA credit points

La conservation du poisson et de la viande, Série Agrodok, Agromisa/CTA, 1994, 66pp. ISBN 90 72746 49 X – CTA number 589, 5 CTA credit points

Starting a small food processing enterprise, CTA/IT Publications, 1996, 128pp. ISBN 1 85339 323 1 – CTA number 777, 5 CTA credit points

Traditional foods: processing for profit, CTA/IT Publications, 1997, 216pp. ISBN 1 85339 228 6 – CTA number 796, 20 CTA credit points

Small-scale production of weaning foods, Agrodok-series, Agromisa/CTA, 1997, 68pp. ISBN 90 72746 76 7 – CTA number 864, 5 CTA credit points

The €uro – Europe's Single Currency is finally born

On 1 January 1999, after a gestation period of more than 30 years, eleven Member States of the European Union (Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain) entered into Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) by establishing the *Euro* and irrevocably fixing their national currency conversion rate to the new currency. Apart from having to achieve economic convergence, this feat has also

required a massive electronic switch of computer systems, which by all accounts went surprisingly smoothly. From now on, the value of the Euro against the dollar and all other currencies, including those of the four Member States staying out of the Euro zone, will fluctuate according to market conditions.

Monetary policy and maintaining price stability in the Euro zone is henceforth the responsibility of the independent, Frankfurt-based, European Central Bank (ECB). It, for example, will determine and

operate the short-term interest rate, currently set at 3%.

As of 1 January, Euros are an acceptable 'written money' currency (i.e. cheques, travellers cheques, bank transfers, credit cards and electronic purses). Euro notes and coins will only enter into circulation in January 2002. Meanwhile, national currencies remain legal tender until they are phased out by June 2002. Under the 'no compulsion, no prohibition' rule, during this period everyone has the right to pay either in euro or national currencies.

Forecasts of continued stability and growth in Europe despite the crises in East Asia's tiger economies and Brazil have given the Euro even greater credibility. The Euro has already positioned itself as a major currency, second only to the US dollar, significantly more important than simply the sum of the eleven currencies that it replaces. It is also expected to become a large international reserve currency.

The Euro represents a key step towards completing economic union. Previously, exchange rate costs and risks were a major bugbear

for companies trading within the EU. Now, inside the single currency zone (dubbed 'Euroland' by journalists) these will be of as little significance as for businesses operating throughout the United States. Consumers and travellers should also benefit from the increased competition that will result from greater price transparency – even before national currencies are completely replaced by the Euro.

Acceptance and understanding of the benefits of joining the Economic and Monetary Union are constantly evolving. Among the Member States currently outside EMU, two (Greece and Denmark) have joined an exchange rate mechanism (ERM II) linking their currencies to the euro in preparation for entering the monetary union. Pressure is also rising in the United Kingdom to join the Euro zone as early as possible.

Yet there is still more work to be done, as *Yves-Thibault de Silguy* (the Commissioner responsible for EMU) clearly underlined when he recently set out four major tasks to be achieved:

- a smooth switch to the Euro by all EU citizens on 1 January 2002;
- strengthened coordination of economic policies;
- development of Europe's capacity to express itself with a single voice in monetary matters;

Official Euro exchange rates for the participating members' national currencies (set on 31 December 1998)

Country	National Currency	Fixed rate against the Euro (€)
Belgium	Franc – BEF	40.3399
Germany	Mark – DEM	1.95583
Spain	Peseta – ESP	166.386
France	Franc – FRF	6.55957
Ireland	Pound – IEP	787564
Italy	Lire – ITL	1936.27
Luxembourg	Franc – LUF	40.3399
Netherlands	Guilder – NLG	2.20371
Austria	Schilling – ATS	13.7603
Portugal	Escudo – PTE	200.482
Finland	Markka – FIM	5.94573

* The parity of the CFA Franc, the trading currency of African countries in the CFA zone, has also been pegged to the Euro. The exchange rate of the CFA Franc against the French Franc remains unchanged (FF1 = CFAF100). This means there is now a fixed rate of CFAF 655.957 to the Euro.

How to calculate using the Euro

1. Use the official euro exchange rates, applied to a precision of six relevant digits.
2. Apply the mathematical rounding rule whereby a value of 0.005 and above is rounded upwards to 0.01
3. Use the principle of 'Triangulation' – that is rather than making a direct conversion (for example from French Francs to German Marks), first, convert the French Francs into Euros (applying the 6-digit rule) and then convert the Euros into Deutsche Marks.

– integration of Member States that have not yet joined EMU and wish to do so. ■ C.O.

Nigeria discussed at Brussels seminar

Nigeria has a population of at least 110 million – which means that at least a quarter of all Africans are Nigerian. This makes it a key country in the development of the continent. It is also the EU's most important ACP trading partner and benefits from the largest programme (€365m) under the 7th European Development Fund (EDF). In November 1995, EU-funded activities halted following the hanging of *Ken Saro Wiwa* and eight other Ogoni chiefs. Sanctions were also imposed on Nigeria. The recent change of military leader has brought with it an impetus for change and power is due to be transferred soon to a democratically elected government. In response, the EU Member States have decided progressively to lift sanctions and to reinstate development funding.

This is a country where military rule resulted in abuse, over a long period, of government administration and resources, with civilians being deprived of many democratic rights. With elections imminent, it was decided to address the major elements of the situation at a two-day seminar held in Brussels on 28-29 January. Participants representing Nigerian and European NGOs, the European Commission, the Nigerian Government and the private sector came together to debate the issues and consider long-term strategies to strengthen the development of civil society and look at ways of alleviating poverty in Nigeria.

Contributors to the conference, while welcoming the recent moves towards establishing an elected civilian government, warned against over-optimism. As one speaker put it, this was only the first step in the process of achieving genuine democracy in Nigeria.

The transition timetable is said to be moving along quite efficiently. The military regime is due to hand over to a democratic government in May 1999. Voting for the National Assembly and the Presidency was scheduled for 2 February and 26 February respectively.

The EU is keen to encourage a smooth transition. To underline its support for the electoral process, it has made €810,000 of funding available. This is being used to send 100 EU observers to the legislative and presidential elections. These personnel would be integrated into a coordinated structure put in place by the United Nations for these polls.

Participants at the meeting also discussed possibilities for EU support to Nigerian civil society in the fields of:

- Internal conflict prevention and resolution particularly in the Niger Delta region (local people here are aggrieved, arguing that they have benefited very little from the oil reserves located on their lands, while receiving no compensation for oil-related pollution caused by multinational companies);
- Democratisation of all levels of society;
- The just distribution of wealth (Nigeria is ranked as the sixth largest oil producer in the world, yet most of its people are poorer today than when the country gained independence 38 years ago);

With the lifting of sanctions, €500 million are available for programme funding in Nigeria. It was recognised that this money needs to be carefully targeted to ensure the best possible impact. Questions were raised about how the EU would monitor the funds and a series of recommendations was made on how resources could best be utilised to strengthen civil society – taking account also of environmental issues, developing partnerships and the need to enhance government capacity and performance. It was not forgotten that women play a crucial role in the Nigerian economy, and there were calls for the EU to support

their effective participation in government and decision-making processes.

The seminar participants rounded off their proceedings by urging the EU to strengthen the capacities of key civil society institutions. It was argued that long military rule, without the presence of strong democratic institutions, made this imperative if the goals of good governance and poverty alleviation were to be met.

'Rule of law restored in Brazzaville'

Jacques Obia, Ambassador of the Republic of Congo (Brazzaville) reported to the European press on 19 January that December's attempted *coup d'Etat* had not succeeded. He said that President *Sassou Nguesso* remained firmly in charge and was 'in the process of restoring respect for the rule of law and human rights'. Despite facing extreme difficulties, the Government was determined to continue striving for stability on the social, political and military levels. Moreover, efforts would continue to achieve peaceful national reconciliation and prepare the people of the country for eventual democratic elections, expected to take place no later than 2000.

The ambassador denounced the activities of 'factions intent on destabilising the country with continued conflict'. The *Ninja* forces of *Bernard Kolélas*, supported by *Pascal Lissouba* and ERDUN (supportive political groups based in Europe and the USA) were blamed for the attacks on Pool, the region south of Brazzaville and on the southern suburbs of Bacongo and Makélékélé. These attacks, according to Mr Obia, had forced inhabitants to take refuge in the northern part of the city.

The Government expressed gratitude for the support and humanitarian aid provided by the international community, including the EU, and NGOs such as the Red Cross.

Mr Obia listed steps being taken to restore stability and prepare the country for democratic elections. On 29 December, President Sassou Nguesso, had signed a non-aggression pact with *Laurent Kabila*, President of the Democratic Republic of Congo (Kinshasa). The two countries have agreed not to threaten their diplomatic relations by harbouring each other's potential enemies within their territories. It is hoped that the pact will serve to control the movements of rebel elements in both countries.

Measures intended to implement the Government's *Acte Fondamental* (basic law) were outlined. These include the nomination of a national Ombudsman and the establishment of a judicial structure, with a High Court of Justice. A national forum, created to promulgate the democratic process, will strive to achieve peace, reconciliation and the integration of 'like-minded political groupings'. To improve efficiency, the national administration is being restructured (with World Bank support). On 15 January, a new team of Government ministers was announced and there are also plans to reorganise the deployment of the security forces.

The Ambassador concluded his presentation by reaffirming the Brazzaville Government's aims for 1999: to re-establish socio-economic, political and military stability (at least to the level that existed prior to the most recent outbreak of conflict); and 'to re-integrate the Republic of Congo into the global economic community as a democratic state'.

What future for agriculture?

On 28 and 29 January, high-level experts met in Brussels to discuss agriculture, trade and sustainable development in a changing global context, with particular reference to the forthcoming round of WTO talks on agriculture and trade, the proposed reform of the EU's Common Agricultural Policy, and the future of the ACP-EU partnership.

Among the speakers were *Gus Schumacher*, US Under-Secretary for Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services, *Franz Fischler*, EU Agriculture Commissioner, *Hector Torres*, Argentine Counsellor to the WTO and *Alex McCalla*, Director of Rural Development at the World Bank.

Topics discussed included:

- The next round of WTO negotiations: towards open world markets?
- The EU's Common Agriculture Policy: friend or foe of developing countries?
- Is a world market for farm goods a threat or an opportunity for developing countries?

Under the threat of a looming EU-US trade war over the banana regime, the US representative assured listeners that his country and the EU could and should work closely together as the two centres of economic and political stability in the world. While there was consensus that change to existing arrangements was inevitable, in the face of globalisation, the emphasis should be on managing that change in a way that was fair and efficient, taking into account environmental and social issues.

D.M.

President Kérékou of Benin visits Brussels

The President of the Republic of Benin, *Matthew Kérékou*, paid a visit to Brussels at the end of January for discussions with the Belgian authorities, the European Union and ACP representatives. The President took the opportunity of a meeting with the ACP Committee of Ambassadors to underline the main challenges facing the African, Caribbean and Pacific states on the threshold of the third millennium, notably as regards economic globalisation. He spoke about the positive impact of ACP-EU cooperation which, he argued, had stood the test of time, and had adapted to many political and economic changes. But Benin's head of state also pointed to the growing poverty confronting peo-

ple who lived in the ACP countries. He emphasised the need for a balanced dialogue between the ACP and EU partners, arguing that a policy of 'diktat' was not the right way to go about eradicating poverty and creating the best possible conditions for sustainable development.

Turning to Benin's own democratic experience, the President reiterated his country's attachment to the human rights principles set out in the UN Charter of 1945, the 1948 Universal Declaration on Human Rights and Africa's own Charter of 1981. The principles of democracy, the rule of law and good governance must, in his view, be a central element of the future ACP-EU agreement.

President Kérékou acknowledged that his own country had not always managed to remain on the path of growth and socio-economic development despite the structural adjustment programme that had been under way since 1986. The main reason for this, he said, was that economic rights had not been given the same status as political ones. With this in mind, the Benin Government was dedicated to improving the macro-economic environment, developing the country's human capital and giving real meaning to the concept of good governance. The President also urged the partners in the ACP-UE relationship to support the process of regional integration, saying that this was the only viable way of dealing with the challenges of globalisation.

Common foreign and security policy declarations

The Presidency of the European Union has recently issued the following declarations in the context of the CFSP:

Violence in Burundi condemned *Declaration of 3 December 1998*

The European Union renews its condemnation of the acts of violence being perpetrated on the Burundian civilian population,

and in particular the massacre in Gihungwe.

It points out in this connection that a declaration was adopted by the armed parties at the first session of peace talks in Arusha in which they undertook to settle the crisis by peaceful means and to bring to an end all forms of violence. The EU hereby repeats its appeal to all the armed groups and government forces to honour this commitment and refrain from all hostilities.

Support for mediation between Ethiopia and Eritrea

Declaration of 16 December 1998

The EU reiterates its strong support for the mediation efforts of the OAU in regard to the Ethiopian-Eritrean conflict that have led to proposals for a framework agreement.

The EU once again expresses its hope that both sides will be able to respond positively to the proposals and that a framework agreement can be concluded at the meeting of the OAU Central Organ on 17-18 December.

Concern about situation in Angola

Declaration of 28 December 1998

The EU expresses its grave concern about the persisting impasse in the Angolan peace process and in the implementation of the 1994 Lusaka Agreements, which have resulted in a serious deterioration of the overall political, military, security, social and economic situation in Angola. The EU deeply regrets that, in spite of several public appeals, including by the UN Secretary-General and the UN Security Council, it has not been possible to avoid major fighting in the central part of Angola. Only a political solution through the full and unconditional implementation of the Lusaka Protocol and relevant UNSC Resolutions may bring a lasting peace to Angola and avoid more suffering of her people. Therefore, the EU urges the parties to refrain from military actions.

Clearly, the main responsibility for this situation is to be attributed to UNITA and its leadership under Dr. Savimbi, which has unjustifiably failed to demilitarise its forces and facilitate the extension of state administration throughout

the national territory (its main commitments under the Lusaka Protocol), in defiance of the pressing demands of the Security Council and the international community.

The EU reiterates its urgent appeal to UNITA to implement unconditionally and without further delay its commitments under the Lusaka Protocol. It further urges UNITA to withdraw immediately from territories which it has reoccupied through military or other action.

Against this background, the EU regrets the increase in minelaying activity in Angola, a country that so far has been a major focus of the Union's demining efforts in Africa. The EU calls on the Government of Angola as a signatory of the Ottawa Convention and particularly on Unita to cease minelaying activity immediately and to ensure that valid records exist so that these weapons can be removed.

In the present situation, the EU stresses the importance of maintaining strong international pressure on UNITA, particularly through the effective and universal application of the measures decided upon the organisation by relevant Security Council Resolutions, as a means to lead UNITA to comply with its obligations. The EU will look at ways to improve the implementation of existing UN sanctions against UNITA and stands ready to consider what further measures against UNITA might be adopted by the UN Security Council.

The EU encourages all Angolan political forces and members of the civil society who favour peace and democracy to unite their efforts to ban violence and consolidate a peaceful and democratic Angola that dedicates its main energies to the welfare of its people.

The EU remains convinced of the continued need for strong UN involvement in Angola and welcomes the recent decision of the UN Security Council to extend the mandate of MONUA until 26 February. It calls on the Government and UNITA to assist the Special Representative of the UNSG, Mr.

Issa Diallo, in fulfilling his mandate for the implementation of the Lusaka Protocol, and remains ready to support the UN Secretary General, his Special Representative and the Troika of observer countries in their task to bring that Protocol to a successful conclusion.

The Union finally appeals to the Government of Angola and in particular to UNITA to respect human rights and to cooperate with MONUA and the humanitarian organisations in the delivery of emergency relief assistance and to guarantee the safety and freedom of movement of their personnel, as well as access to affected populations. The EU reiterates its will to continue to provide humanitarian aid to the victims of the conflict, the people of Angola.

An Eritrean viewpoint

As a regular Courier reader, I was dismayed by an article entitled, 'Ethiopia and Eritrea: the roots of conflict' that appeared in issue 172 (p. 5). This contained a number of errors and gave a simplistic explanation of a complex situation. The root of the conflict is not economics but a border dispute. The problem began in 1997 when Ethiopia established the practice of crossing into Eritrean territory and claiming the area as its own. To give this a veneer of legitimacy, Ethiopia issued a map in 1997, incorporating parts of Eritrea into its territory. To add to the confusion, Addis Ababa issued another map in 1998. This is a case of an international border 'delineated' without the participation of the adjoining state.



Going to war for economic reasons makes no sense. One sovereign state cannot force another into an unwelcome economic relationship militarily, short of annexing the country, or turning it into a vassal state. At any rate, neither Eritrea nor Ethiopia has the capability to do so, though Ethiopia may harbour a wish for such an eventuality.

The Eritrean port of Assab, to which Ethiopia had free access, handled about 70% of the latter's trade. Ethiopia decided to cease using the port to deprive Eritrea of revenue. But Eritrea has alternative and profitable uses for the facility. If Ethiopia severs all economic ties and closes its borders, Eritrea will not only survive but will continue to prosper.

As regards borders, you say that three months after the conflict began, Eritrea 'adopted a tougher line'. This is erroneous. Eritrea's position has always been unambiguous. Its borders are those delineated by the former colonial powers. There are treaties and maps regarding these frontiers. The OAU and international conventions have affirmed the sacrosanct nature of the borders. In the event of a dispute, therefore, legal instruments should be used to resolve it.

As to which country is forcibly deporting civilians, I suggest you obtain a report prepared by EU country representatives assigned to Eritrea. Many Ethiopians living in Eritrea have left voluntarily under the supervision of the ICRC and other international bodies. None were jailed or maltreated and their property rights were respected. Most of those who left were Assab port workers who lost their jobs when Ethiopia stopped using the port. They are therefore victims of their own country's political moves. Ethiopians who prefer to remain in Eritrea can do so and are legally protected. To date, more than 42,000 Eritreans have been deported from Ethiopia and have had their property confiscated. Incredibly, many Ethiopian nationals were also deported because they were married to Eritreans.

The article also says that Eritrea's independence 'occurred peacefully' in 1991. This is like saying World War II ended peacefully after the fall of Hitler! In the interest of historical accuracy, it should be noted that Eritrea's independence came after 30 years of armed struggle, resulting in the military defeat of the occupying forces. Mengistu's fall was a direct consequence of this war. ■

Eyasu Hadgu, Asmara, Eritrea

Integrating African intellectuals

Despite the willingness of the African diaspora, the conditions relating to the integration of African intellectuals has never been tackled by the continent's decision-makers – who have been responsible for endless migration. The generation that studied in the West is following the efforts made by the international

institutions to rescue Africa from its 25-year long economic recession. And they want to take part in their continent's development. But while all these expatriate intellectuals, with training in various fields, are undoubtedly an asset, we find they are barely exploited. Yet they are efficient and well-adapted to achieving good project implementation. This is something that should be put on the agenda of ACP-EU dialogue. It is important for the diaspora to be integrated into their national administrations and into development programmes, following a short period of training. The aim would be to boost cooperation by a 'rapprochement' of attitudes and points of view. This would enable Africans to reflect on forms of the State and, above all, to give the latter a distinct character. To avoid poor public management, the State as a 'moral' person needs to be separated from the individuals who actually manage it and their riches. We cannot, however, ignore the fact that the change required in African states can only come about when the people living in them learn about and live with democracy. Only they can install a new system and make it work while retaining and respecting the principles of their own societies.

Third World students face a number of financial and political obstacles in seeking to integrate back into their own countries. This is due to the system that prevails in many developing countries and to policies pursued by multinationals and international organisations that are established there (salary differentials between nationals and expatriates with the same qualifications). Some Western governments have schemes to assist and encourage the return of qualified people from the South to their countries of origin. Despite this, only a third of those gaining degrees end up going home. It would be beneficial if the West were to link its development aid programmes with those relating to the return of Southern graduates. This could resolve two problems at the same time. For a long time now, donors have sought to encourage female participation in projects, in recognition of the vital role they can play. Yet mention is never made in projects, of the huge intellectual potential of the diaspora in the West – these are people who have almost no chance, at present, to use the knowledge they acquired during their training. Today, Western nations complain about immigration. Why not use the development programmes they themselves finance to find a solution to the problem. At the same time, they would be helping to improve social conditions in the developing countries. ■

Jean Cadet On'Etambalako-Odimba, Bruxelles



Civil society and the aid industry

edited by Alison Van Rooy, Earthscan, 120 Pentonville Road, London N1 9JN, UK. £15.95. ISBN 1 85383 553 6. 237pp.

In this publication, six authors and three specialist advisers seek to 'decode' the concept of civil society in the light of what they call the development aid 'industry'.

Governments of the North and NGOs have become increasingly convinced that 'civil society' can help the people of developing countries throw off the curse of poverty. This work is the outcome of a major research programme undertaken by the highly prestigious *North-South Institute* in Canada. It offers a critical appreciation of the new importance accorded to the aid industry and seeks to tackle a number of key questions: for example, what is the role of NGOs, official aid agencies of developed countries and international institutions; and what can be done to support civil society in the South.

Having suggested that the very notion should be revised, each author offers an analysis of 'civil society' in the post-socialist world, looking at the role it has played in building states and consolidating nations, and in relations between states. They consider democratisation policies and the challenge posed by autocracy. The concluding section, by Alison Van Rooy, is entitled 'The Art of Strengthening Civil Society'. Here, the writer seeks to draw together the strands of the discussion. The book takes the reader on a tour through Hungary, Peru, Kenya and Sri Lanka, and gives its specialist authors an opportunity to make recommendations aimed at improving the performance and impact of future projects.

Le plurilinguisme dans les organisations internationales

(Multilingualism in International Organisations)

Symposium held in Geneva, 5 and 6 November, 1998

edited by the 'Organisation internationale de la francophonie', 28, rue de Bourgogne - 75007 Paris, France. Tél: (33 1) 44 11 12 50, Fax: (33 1) 44 11 03 01

With a subtitle 'Investing in diversity', this volume of 313 pages contains the proceedings of the above-mentioned symposium on multilingualism. The aim of the meeting was to look at ways of 'promoting the symphony of languages in the concert of nations'. Here, the multilingual cause is defended by those who use more than one language in their everyday work - officials of international organisations generally must be competent in at least two languages to exercise their profession. The publication, which includes the proceedings of the various workshops held at the symposium, provides useful information about source documents on the subject. You can find, for example, the extent to which the Latin languages are used on the Internet, publications available in UN libraries (classified by theme and language), and indeed, statistics about the international civil servants who work in Geneva.

Coopération bilatérale et expansion commerciale: l'expérience italienne

(Bilateral cooperation and trade expansion: the Italian experience)

by Luigi Arcuri, L'Harmattan, 5-7, rue de l'Ecole-Polytechnique, 75005 Paris, France. 300pp. €22.87, ISBN 2-7384-6858-6

The debate about cooperation and development aid has recently taken on added significance thanks to its new orientation in favour of enterprise and the private sector in countries undergoing development 'therapy'. The conclusion of contracts on the donor side and access to credit in recipient countries are nonetheless, still key aspects of the cooperation business. This study looks at how cooperation prac-

tices and their associated financial tools are affected by liberalisation, at the reorientation taking place between the public and private sectors, and at the nature of local entrepreneurial systems and business networks. Dealing with the link between cooperation and trade expansion, the author refers to the policies and practices of one of the member countries (Italy) of the OECD's Development Assistance Committee, to illustrate his analysis.

The author is an economist at the Cesare Alfieri University in Florence. He has produced a number of research works and financial evaluations for international organisations.

Disciplines et déchirures: Les formes de la violence

(Disciplines and cleavages: Forms of violence)

Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines 150-152, XXXVIII (2-4), 1998. Distribution: CID, 131 Bvd Saint-Michel, 75005 Paris, France. 526p, €36.59, ISBN 2-7132-1248-0

This special issue deals with questions that, given current events and the effort to understand them (as expressed by its title, 'Disciplines and Cleavages'), call for attention. It asks whether or not the violence that enables the emergence and recognition of a new political discipline in the contemporary world is inevitable.

Contributions to this issue range from Algiers to Johannesburg and from Brazzaville to Kigali. Presented in an order combining both chronological and geographical considerations, the articles do not defend any particular thesis. The authors have mainly sought to bring to light the autonomy of current conflicts. They emphasise how political actors seek ways of transforming the post-colonial state into local and regional political institutions.

ec-acp

New European Development Fund schemes (to 17 February 1999)

As of this issue, the Operational Summary will contain only new EDF projects and programmes. Full details of ongoing EDF projects and programmes are available on the Internet.

Full operational summary available on the INTERNET

<http://europa.eu.int/comm/dg08/pabli-en/introbp1.htm>

Information given

The following details will usually be given for each development scheme:

- The title of the project.
- The administrative body responsible for it.
- The estimated sum involved (prior to financing decision) or the amount actually provided (post-financing decision)
- A brief description of projects envisaged (construction work, equipment supplies, technical assistance etc.)
- Any methods of implementation (for example, international invitations to tender).
- The stage the project has reached (identification, appraisal, submission for financing, financing decision, ready for implementation)

Main abbreviations

€	Euro
Resp. Auth.	Responsible Authority
Int. Tender	International invitation to tender
Acc. Tender	Invitation to tender (accelerated procedure)
Restr. Tender	Restricted invitation to tender
T.A.	Technical Assistance
EDF	European Development Fund (e.g. EDF 7 = 7th European Development Fund)
Est.	Estimated

Correspondence about the information contained in this section can be sent directly to:

Mr Franco Cupini,
European Commission
B28 6-108,
200, rue de la Loi
B-1049 Brussels

Please cover only one subject at a time.

Participation in EDF schemes is strictly confined to ACP or EU firms.

ACP STATES

BELIZE

Social Investment Fund (SIF) Belize. Total cost: €1.6m.
Date financing: October 1998. EDF 8.
EDF BEL/7003/000.

BENIN

Support for the modernisation of the Ministry of Finance. €1.9m. T.A. including studies; supplies. Date financing: November 1998. EDF 8.
EDF BEN/7012/000.

COTE D'IVOIRE

Support for the health sector. €30m. Support for the Health Organisation Reform Programme. Project on appraisal. EDF 8.

EDF CIV/6011/001.

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Rehabilitation Programme in the Southwest Region.

Total cost: €1.98m. Retention wall; water supply; reinstallation of 'Enriquillo' radio connection. Date financing: January 1999. EDF 8.

EDF DO/7026/000.

ETHIOPIA

EC Programme Support Project (PSP). €0.67m. T.A.; short term training, seminars, workshops, study tours.

Date financing: November 1998.

EDF 7. EDF ET/7023/000.

GUINEA

PASSIP - Programme to support the health system in the Guinean interior. Resp. Auth.: Ministry of Health.

€13.2m. Decentralisation support and building management capacity. T.A., construction/development of infrastructures, supplies and training. Date financing: November 1998. EDF 8.

EDF GUI/6022/002.

Support to strengthen financial management in public hospitals. Support to MSP's DAAF. €1.3m. Date financing: November 1998.

EDF 8. EDF GUI/7031/000.

MADAGASCAR

Pilot project to support rural development in the regions (PAIR). €1.98m. Date financing: November 1998. EDF 8.

EDF MAG/7029/001.

Equal opportunities and development project. €0.41m. Promotion of equal opportunities in social and economic development. Financial support, supplies, equipment; A.T. including studies. Date financing: November 1998.

EDF 8.

EDF MAG/7049/000.

Programme to rehabilitate the National Statistical System (NSS). €1.825m. T.A., local appraisal, works and studies. Date financing: December 1998. EDF 6.

EDF MAG/7013/000.

Hydroelectric micro-power station in Maroantsetra.

Total estimated cost: €1.93m. Works, supplies; surveillance and control. Project on appraisal. Date foreseen for financing: March 1999. EDF 8.

EDF MAG/5018/001.

MALAWI

Support for Health Reform and Decentralisation.

€14m. Supplementary funding for Chiradzulu District Hospital. Project on appraisal. Date foreseen for financing: February 1999. EDF 8.

EDF MAI/6009/005.

Assistance for civic and voter education for local and national elections. €1.97m. Regional workshops, production of materials, logistics, monitoring. PMU administration and management. Date financing: December 1998. EDF 8.

EDF MAI/7022/001.

MAURITIUS

Enhancing the competitiveness of Mauritius

Freeport. Total cost: €1.95m. Studies, T.A., equipment and evaluations. Date financing: October 1998. Project in execution. EDF 8.

EDF MAS/7015/000.

Support for the Clothing Technology Centre. Total cost: €1.365m. T.A., training; equipment, evaluation. Date financing: January 1999. Project in execution. EDF 8.

EDF MAS/6002/001.

NIGERIA

1998/99 Support for elections in Nigeria. Total est. cost: €1.9m. Improvement of the capacities of INEC (Independent National Electoral Commission). T.A., organisation and financing of civic education, training and computer equipment. Date financing: December 1998. EDF 7.

EDF UNI/7019/000.

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Islands Region Environmental Programme. €6m. Eco-forest environmental programme. Project on appraisal. EDF 8.

EDF PNG/7007/000.

RWANDA

Structural Adjustment Support Programme (SAF I). Resp. Auth.: Government of Rwanda. Est. cost: €24.6m. Budgetary support. Project on appraisal. Date foreseen for financing: December 1998. EDF 6,8.

EDF RW/7200/000.

SIERRA LEONE

Urgency Procedure - 1998 Structural Adjustment Support Programme. Total cost: €8.5m. Financial support plus T.A. Date financing: December 1998. EDF 8.

EDF SL/7200/001.

VANUATU

Rural Tourism Development Programme. Total cost: €0.75m. Education/training sessions in tourism management; T.A., establishment of a website. Date financing: November 1998. EDF 8.

EDF VA/6012/000.

Statistical Training in the SADC Region. €5m.

Training; T.A. including studies. Project on appraisal. EDF 8.

EDF REG/6446/000.

SADC Regional Drug Control Programme (SRDCP).

€3m. Training; T.A. including studies. Project on appraisal. EDF 8.

EDF REG/7423/001.

EU-SADC Investment Promotion Programme. €15m.

Training; T.A. including studies. Project on appraisal. EDF 8.

EDF REG/7426/000.

Implementation of SADC Plan of Action for HIV/AIDS.

€3m. Project on appraisal. EDF 8.

EDF REG/7432/001.

REGIONAL PROJECTS

INTRA-ACP

Financing an ACP staff member in Geneva. €1.1m.

Supplies of equipment, T.A. including studies. Project on appraisal. EDF 7.

EDF REG/7007/002.

IMF/EU Seminar Programme for Macroeconomic Management. €1.9m. Training seminars. T.A. including studies. Date financing: December 1998. EDF 7, 8.

EDF REG/7004/015.

Analysis and Information System for Fisheries

(AISF). €3m. Project on appraisal. Date foreseen for financing: February 1999. EDF 7.

EDF/REG/7104/000.

MEMBER COUNTRIES OF ECOWAS

Second ECOWAS Commercial Fair. Total estimated

cost: €0.95m. Support for ECOWAS Member State participation (16 States). Advertising, promotion. T.A. Project on appraisal. Date foreseen for financing: March 1999. EDF 8.

EDF REG/7121/001.

SADC

Regional Programme for Livestock Disease Control in the SADC Region. Regional Tsetse and Trypanosomiasis Programme/SADC Animal Disease Control Programme. €10m. Project on appraisal. EDF 8.

EDF REG/5406/003.

SADC Regional Food Security Training Programme - Phase II. €3m. Training; T.A. including studies. Project on appraisal. EDF 8.

EDF REG/6420/001.

DELEGATIONS OF THE COMMISSION IN ACP COUNTRIES AND OCTS

Angola

Rue Rainha Jinga 6,
Luanda C.P. 2669
Tel. (244 2) 393038 - 391277 - 391339
Telex 3397 DELCEE - AN
Fax (244 2) 392531

Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean

James Fort Building
Hincks Street, Bridgetown.
Tel. (1 246) 4274362 - 4297103
Fax (1 246) 4278687
Telex (0392) DELEGFED WG 2327

Benin

Avenue de Clozel,
01. B.P. 910 Cotonou.
Tel. (229) 312684 - 312617
Fax (229) 315328

Botswana

P.O. Box 1253,
North Ring Road, Gaborone
Tel. (267) 314455 - 314456 - 314457
Telex 2403 DECEC - BD
Fax (267) 313626

Burkina Faso

B.P. 352,
Ouagadougou.
Tel. (226) 307385 - 307386 - 308650
Fax (226) 308966

Burundi

Avenue du 13 Octobre,
B.P. 103, Bujumbura.
Tel. (257) 223426
Fax (257) 224612
Telex FED BDI 5031

Cameroon

105 rue 1770, Quartier Bastos,
B.P. 847 Yaoundé.
Tel. (237) 201387 - 203367
Fax (237) 202149

Cape Verde

Achada de Santo Antonio,
C.P. 122, Praia.
Tel. (238) 621392 - 621393 - 621394
Fax (238) 621391

Central African Republic

Rue de Flandre,
B.P. 1298, Bangui.
Tel. (236) 613053
Fax (236) 616535

Chad

Route de Farcha,
B.P. 552, N'Djamena.
Tel. (235) 528977 - 527276
Telex 5245 KD
Fax (235) 527105

Congo (Democratic Republic)

71 Avenue des Trois Z,
B.P. 2000, Kinshasa.
Tel. (by satellite) (871) 685 053 336
Fax: (by satellite) (871) 685 053 337

Congo (Republic)

Avenue Lyautey (opposite Italian
Embassy),
B.P. 2149 Brazzaville.
Tel. (by satellite) (871) 761.480.259
Fax (by satellite) (871) 761.480.261

Côte d'Ivoire

18 rue du Dr. Crozet,
B.P. 1821, Abidjan 01.
Tel. (225) 212428
Fax (225) 214089

Djibouti

11 Boulevard du Maréchal Joffre,
B.P. 2477, Djibouti.
Tel. (253) 352615
Fax (253) 350036

Dominican Republic

Calle Rafael Augusto Sanchez 21,
Ensanche Naco, Santo Domingo.
Tel. (1 809) 5405837 - 5406074
Fax (1 809) 5675851
Telex 4757 EUROCOMSD DR

Eritrea

Gainer Street 1,
P.O. Box 5710 Asmara.
Tel. (291 1) 126566
Fax (291 1) 126578

Ethiopia

P.O. Box 5570,
Addis Adaba.
Tel. (251 1) 612511
Fax (251 1) 612877
Telex 21738 DELEGEUR - ET

Gabon

Bas de Gué-Gué,
B.P. 321, Libreville.
Tel. (241) 732250
Fax (241) 736554

Gambia

10, 10th Street South,
Fajara
P.O. Box 512, Banjul
Tel. (220) 495146, 497846, 497847
Fax (220) 497848

Ghana

The Round House, 81 Cantonments Road,
P.O. Box 9505, (Kotoka International
Airport), Accra.
Tel. (233 21) 774201 - 774202 - 774236
Fax (233 21) 774154

Guinea

B.P. 730 CONAKRY.
Tel. (224) 464942
Fax (224) 461874

Guinea Bissau

Bairro da Penha,
C.P. 359, 1113 Bissau.
Tel. (245) 251027 - 251071 - 251469 -
251471
Fax (245) 251044

Guyana

72 High Street, Kingston,
P.O. Box 10847, Georgetown.
Tel. (592 2) 64004 - 65424
Fax (592 2) 62615

Haiti

Delmas 60, Impasse Brave n°1,
B.P. 15588, Petion Ville, Port au Prince.
Tel. (509) 494480 - 493491
Fax 490246

Jamaica

8 Olivier Road, P.O. Box 463,
Constant Spring Road, Kingston 8.
Tel. (1 876) 9246333/4/5/6/7
e-mail eudeljam@wtjam.net
Fax (1 876) 9246339

Kenya

Union Insurance Building, Ragati Road,
P.O. Box 45119, Nairobi.
Tel. (254 2) 713020 - 713021 - 712860 -
712905 - 712906
Fax (254-2) 71.64.81
Telex 22483 DELEUR KE

Lesotho

167 Constitution Road,
P.O. Box MS 518, Maseru.
Tel. (266) 313726
Fax (266) 310193

Liberia

EC Aid Coordination Office,
UN Drive, Mamba Point, Monrovia.
Tel. (231) 226273
Fax (231) 226274

Madagascar

Immeuble Ny Havana,
B.P. 746 Antananarivo 101.
Tel. (261 20) 22 242 16
Fax (261 20) 22 645 62
E-mail delcemad@bow.dts.mg

Malawi

Europa House,
P.O. Box 30102, Capital City, Lilongwe 3
Tel. (265) 783199 - 783124 - 782743
Fax (265) 783534

Mali

Avenue de l'OUA, Badalabougou Est,
B.P. 115, Bamako.
Tel. (223) 222356 - 222065
Fax (223) 223670
e-mail: eudelmli@cefib.com

Mauritania

Ilôt V, Lot 24,
B.P. 213, Nouakchott.
Tel. (222 2) 56396 - 56384
Fax (222 2) 53524

Mauritius

8th floor, Batiment St. James Court,
Rue St. Denis,
Port Louis, B.P. 1148
Tel. (230) 2116295 (6 lines)
Fax. (230) 2116624
E-mail. Europe@bow.intnet.mu

Mozambique

1214 Avenida do Zimbabwe,
C.P. 1306, Maputo.
Tel. (258 1) 490266 - 491716 - 490271
Fax (258 1) 491866
Telex (0992) 6-146 CCE MO

Namibia

4th Floor, Sanlam Building, 154
Independence Avenue,
9000 Windhoek.
Tel. (264 61) 220099
Fax (264 61) 235135

Niger

B.P. 10388, Niamey.
Tel. (227) 732360 - 732773 - 734832
Fax (227) 732322

Nigeria**Lagos**

Knorr House,
Ozumba Mbadiwe Avenue (opposite 1004
flats)
Victoria Island
P.M.B. 12767, Lagos
Tél (234 1) 2617852, 2610857
Fax (234 1) 2617248
E-mail: ecnig@infoweb.abs.net

Abuja

Tel. (234 9) 5233144 - 5233146
Fax (234 9) 5233147

Pacific (Fiji, Kiribati, Western Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu)

4th Floor, Development Bank Centre,
Victoria Parade,
Private Mail Bag, Suva.
Tel. (679) 313633
Fax (679) 300370
e-mail: eudelfiji@eu.org.fj

Papua New Guinea

The Lodge (3rd Floor), Bampton street,
P.O. Box 76, Port Moresby.
Tel. (675) 3213544 - 3213504 - 3213718
Fax (675) 3217850

Rwanda

Avenue Député Kamuzinzi 14,
B.P. 515 Kigali.
Tel. (250) 75586 - 75589 - 72536
Fax (250) 74313

Senegal

12 Avenue Albert Sarraut,
B.P. 3345, Dakar.
Tel. (221) 8231314 - 8234777
Fax (221) 823.18.83

Sierra Leone

Wesley House, 4 George Street,
P.O. Box 1399, Freetown.
Tel. (232 22) 223975 - 223025
Fax (232 22) 225212

South Africa

P.O. Box 945, Groenkloof 0027, Pretoria.
Tel. (27-12) 464319
Fax (27-12) 469923

Sudan

3rd floor - AAAID Building,
Osman Digna Avenue,
P.O. Box 2363, Khartoum.
Tel. (249 11) 775054 - 775148
Telex 23096 DELSU SD
Fax (249 11) 775393

Suriname

Dr. S. Redmondstraat 239,
P.O. Box 484, Paramaribo.
Tel. (597) 499322 - 499349 - 492185
Fax (597) 493076

Tanzania

38 Mirambo Street,
P.O. Box 9514, Dar es Salaam.
Tel. (255 51) 117473 (pilot) - 117474 -
117475 - 117476
Fax (255 51) 113277
Telex (0989) 41353 DELCOM TZ

Togo

Avenue Nicolas Grunitzky 37,
B.P. 1657 Lomé.
Tel. (228) 213662 - 210832
Fax (228) 211300

Trinidad and Tobago

The Mutual Centre,
16 Queen's Park West,
P.O. Box 1144, Port of Spain.
Tel. (1 868) 6226628 - 6220591
Fax (1 868) 6226355

Uganda

Rwenzori House, 1 Lumumba Avenue,
P.O. Box 5244? Kampala.
Tel. (256 41) 233303 - 233304
Fax (256 41) 233708

Zambia

Plot 4899, Los Angeles Boulevard,
P.O. Box 34871, Lusaka.
Tel. (260 1) 250711 - 251140
Fax (260 1) 250906

Zimbabwe

6th floor, Construction House,
110 Leopold Takawira Street,
P.O. Box 4252, Harare.
Tel. (263 4) 707120 - 707139 - 752835
Fax (263 4) 725360

OFFICES OF THE COMMISSION IN ACP COUNTRIES AND OCTS

Antigua and Barbuda

Upper St George's Street,
P.O. Box 1392, St. John's.
Tel. (1 268) 462 2970
Fax (1 268) 462 2670

Bahamas

2nd floor, Frederick House, Frederick
Street,
P.O. Box N-3246, Nassau.
Tel. (1 242) 325 5850
Fax (1 242) 323 3819

Belize

1 Eyre Street,
P.O. Box 907, Belize City.
Tel (501-2) 32 070
Fax (501-2) 72.785

Comoros

Boulevard de la Corniche,
B.P. 559, Moroni.
Tel. (269) 732306 - 733191
Fax (269) 732494
Telex 212 DELCEC KO

Equatorial Guinea

Route de l'Aéroport,
B.P. 779, Malabo.
Tel. (240 9) 3284
Fax (240 9) 3275

Netherlands Antilles and Aruba

Scharlooweg 37,
P.O. Box 822, Willemstad (Curaçao).
Tel. (599 9) 4618488
Fax (599 9) 4618423

New Caledonia (OCT)

19 avenue du Maréchal Foch - 6th floor,
98845 Noumea.
B.P. 1100, 98845 Noumea Cedex.
Tel. (687) 277002
Fax (687) 288707

Samoa

4th floor, Ioane Viliamu Building,
P.O. Box 3023, Apia.
Tel. (685) 20070
Fax (685) 24622

São Tomé and Príncipe

B.P. 132, São Tomé.
Tel (239 12) 21780 - 21373
Telex 224 DELEGFED ST
Fax (239-12) 22683

Seychelles

P.O. Box 530, Victoria, Mahé.
Tel. (248) 323940
Fax. (248) 323890

Solomon Islands

2nd floor, City Centre Building,
P.O. Box 844, Honiara.
Tel. (677) 22765
Fax (677) 23318

Somalia

EC Somalia Unit,
Union Insurance House (first floor),
Ragati Road, P.O. Box 30475, Nairobi,
Kenya.
Tel. (254 2) 712830 - 713250 - 713251
Fax (254 2) 710997

Swaziland

Lilunga House, 4th Floor, Gilfillan Street
Mbabane.
P.O. Box A.36, Swazi Plaza, H101
Tel. (268) 42908 - 42018
Fax (268) 46729

Tonga

Mailletaha, Taufa'ahau Road,
Private Mailbag n° 5, Nuku'Alofa.
Tel. (676) 23820
Fax (676) 23869

Vanuatu

Moore Stephens House, Ground Floor,
Kumul Highway, Higginson Street
P.O. Box 422, Port Vila.
Tel. (678) 22501
Fax (678) 23282

Austria
Belgium
Denmark
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Greece
Ireland
Italy
Luxembourg
Netherlands
Portugal
Spain
Sweden
United Kingdom

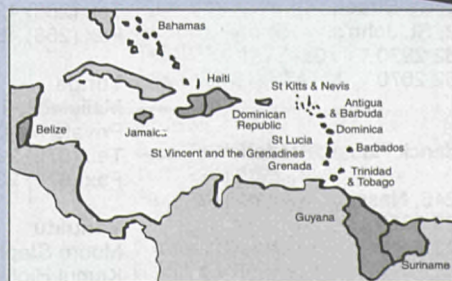
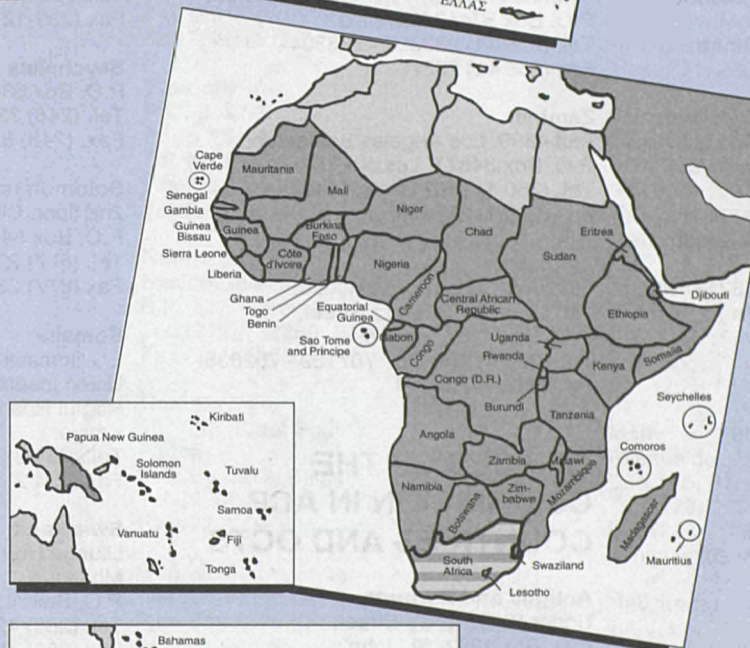
France
(Territorial collectivities)
Mayotte
St Pierre and Miquelon
(Overseas territories)
New Caledonia and dependencies
French Polynesia
French Southern and Antarctic
Territories
Wallis and Futuna Islands

Netherlands
(Overseas countries)
Netherlands Antilles
(Bonaire, Curaçao,
St Martin,
Saba, St Eustache)
Aruba

Denmark
(Country having special
relations with Denmark)
Greenland

United Kingdom
(Overseas countries and
territories)
Anguilla
British Antarctic Territory
British Indian Ocean Territory
British Virgin Islands
Cayman Islands
Falkland Islands
Southern Sandwich Islands
and dependencies
Montserrat
Pitcairn Island
St Helena and dependencies
Turks and Caicos Islands

THE EUROPEAN UNION



THE 71 ACP STATES

Angola
Antigua & Barbuda
Bahamas
Barbados
Belize
Benin
Botswana
Burkina Faso
Burundi
Cameroon
Cape Verde
Central African Republic
Chad
Comoros
Congo
Congo (ex-Zaire)
Côte d'Ivoire
Djibouti
Dominica
Dominican Republic
Equatorial Guinea
Eritrea
Ethiopia
Fiji
Gabon
Gambia
Ghana
Grenada
Guinea
Guinea Bissau
Guyana
Haiti
Jamaica
Kenya
Kiribati
Lesotho
Liberia
Madagascar
Malawi
Mali
Mauritania
Mauritius
Mozambique
Namibia
Niger
Nigeria
Papua New Guinea
Rwanda
St Kitts and Nevis
St Lucia
St Vincent
and the Grenadines
Samoa
Sao Tome & Principe
Senegal
Seychelles
Sierra Leone
Solomon Islands
Somalia
South Africa*
Sudan
Suriname
Swaziland
Tanzania
Togo
Tonga
Trinidad & Tobago
Tuvalu
Uganda
Vanuatu
Zambia
Zimbabwe

General Secretariat
of the ACP Group
of States
Avenue Georges Henri, 451
1200 Brussels
Belgium
Tel.: 743 06 00

This list does not prejudice
the status of these countries and territories
now or in the future.
The Courier uses maps from a variety
of sources. Their use does not imply
recognition of any particular boundaries
nor prejudice the status of any state
or territory

*Not all provisions of the Lomé
Convention apply to South Africa



This green and pleasant landscape could be mistaken for a rural setting somewhere in Europe – were it not for the palm trees in the foreground. In fact, it is the *Izulwini Valley* – located towards the south of the African continent, in the landlocked Kingdom of Swaziland. Many visitors from the northern hemisphere say they are reminded of home when they see the country for the first time. Some even liken the mountain scenery to Switzerland – without the ski-lifts!

African contrasts

Visitors to Djibouti do not need to stray far from the capital to witness the impressive work of Mother Nature. The ravine pictured here is referred to by some of the locals as 'Devil's Gorge' and in the Afar language, it is called *Tibraha*, which translates as 'keep quiet'. This call for silence has no religious or cultural significance. It is simply a practical recommendation because you need keep your mind firmly on where you put your feet. If you slip over the edge, it means certain death – and the green water which flows below will soon remove any trace of your presence.



Djibouti

